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THE MAKING OF...
JET FORCE GEMINI
RARE ON HOW TO MAKE A CULT N64 BLASTER

Tales From MONKEY ISLAND
THE CREATORS RETURN TO MELEE ISLAND

LET'S ALL PLAY
PAPERBOY
READERS REMEMBER ATARI'S ARCADE HIT

DESERT ISLAND DISKS
BEN DAGLISH
AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH THE C64 MUSIC MAESTRO

RETRO TREASURES THIS MONTH

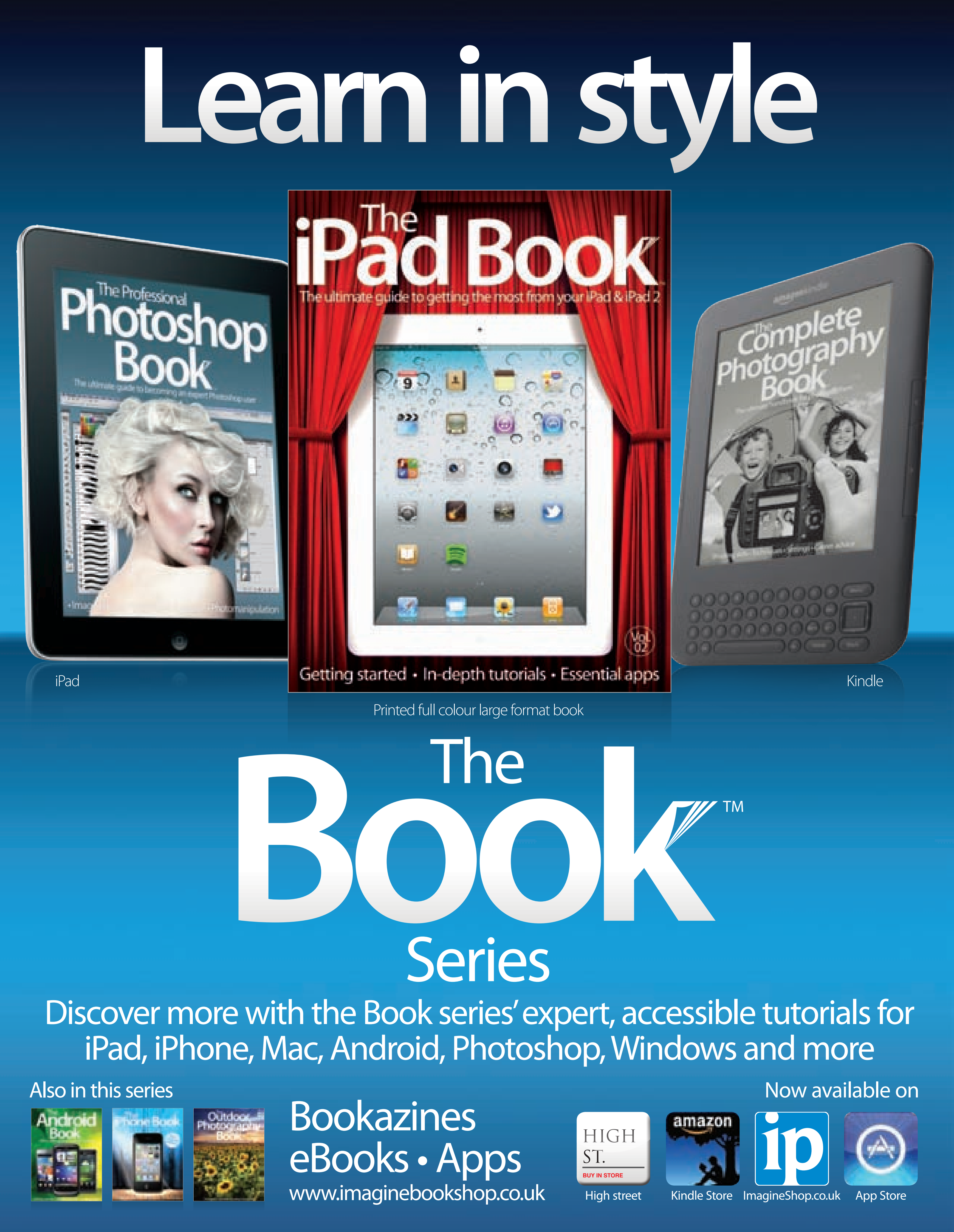
SNK NEO GEO WHY SNK'S PRICEY CONSOLE IS WELL WORTH THE EXPENSE

DRAGON NINJA A FOND LOOK BACK AT DATA EAST'S SUPERB SCROLLING BEAT-'EM-UP

SWITCHBLADE BEHIND THE SCENES OF GREMLIN'S CULT PLATFORMER

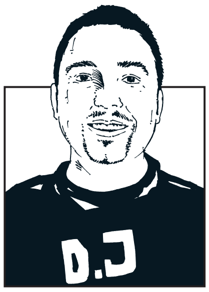
THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK CREATOR MIKE HALLY ON TURNING STAR WARS PART V INTO AN EPIC WIRE-FRAME ARCADE SHOOT-'EM-UP

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THE RETROBATES

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE POINT-AND-CLICK GAME?



DARRAN JONES

Indiana Jones And The Fate Of Atlantis. Great music, engaging characters and a fantastic script all combined to make the best film George Lucas never made.
Expertise:
Juggling a wife, two beautiful girls and **Retro Gamer**
Currently playing:
Uncharted 2
Favourite game of all time:
Robotron: 2084



STUART HUNT

The House Of The Dead 2. What? You point and click in it, do you not? In all seriousness, it has to be *Day Of The Tentacle* for me. It's wonderfully written and is still incredible after all these years.
Expertise:
Games with flying bits in them
Currently playing:
Batman: Arkham Asylum
Favourite game of all time:
Batman: Arkham Asylum



JASON KELK

The one that kept me entertained for the longest time was *Myst*; one of the slowest-paced games I've ever played but brimming with atmosphere.
Expertise:
What used to be called public-domain software
Currently playing:
Kernal's Chaos (still)
Favourite game of all time:
Io



CRAIG GRANNELL

I largely side with Richard Harris when he says such games signalled the point we forgot about language and reverted to the electronic equivalent of banging rocks together.
Expertise:
Games you don't need 37 fingers to control
Currently playing:
Squareball
Favourite game of all time:
H.E.R.O.



RICHARD BURTON

Grim Fandango has everything: an atmospheric world stuffed full of stylised graphics, which is complemented by the dark script. The result is just about faultless.
Expertise:
Stuff, nonsense, things and stuff
Currently playing:
Manic Miner: Anniversary Edition
Favourite game of all time:
Manic Miner III



DAVID CROOKES

Broken Sword. As someone already fascinated by the Knights Templar, this adventure lured me in from the explosive start.
Expertise: All things Amstrad CPC, *Dizzy*, Atari Lynx and PlayStation
Currently playing:
Elite
Favourite game of all time:
Broken Sword



PAUL DRURY

I've always had a soft spot for Ocean's crack at the genre, *Hook*, but having recently revisited the excellent *Broken Sword* on the DS, I'll sensibly opt for that instead.
Expertise:
Humming along to SID tunes
Currently playing:
Touch Me (Atari handheld)
Favourite game of all time:
Sheep In Space



IAIN LEE

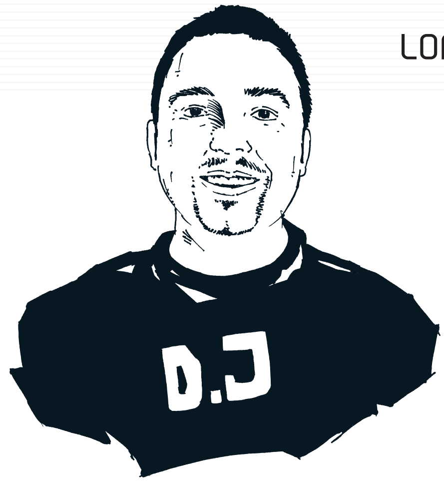
I guess the *Monkey Island* games, although if I'm completely honest, it's not really a genre that does it for me.
Expertise:
Pretending to be American while playing on Xbox Live
Currently playing:
Just back from Japan where I spent way too many yen playing *Mario Kart* in an arcade in Shibuya
Favourite game of all time:
Elite (the BBC Model B version)



PAUL DAVIES

Fave point-and-click is *Monkey Island*, but I still prefer *Colossal Cave Adventure*.
Expertise:
Banging my head against brick walls
Currently playing:
FIFA 10, *Uncharted 2* and *KOF '98 Dream Match*
Favourite game of all time:
Ghouls 'N' Ghosts

LOADING...



Wow… 70 issues. That's a pretty impressive achievement for any magazine, but even more so for a title that's as niche as Retro Gamer. It would be easy to sit on our laurels and simply look back at the past achievements we've had within the magazine, but there is still so much work to be done.

For example, this month's breathtaking cover highlights the fact that, aside from a look at the original game, there has been no real coverage of LucasArts' *Monkey Island* series – pretty amazing when you consider how popular Guybrush Threepwood and the rest of Mêlée Island's inhabitants actually are.

And yet, if we're honest, Guybrush is just the tip of an almighty iceberg that proves that there is plenty more great content to come. When did you last see a feature on *Mario*, read about *Missile Command*, or discover just how impressive the Apple II was within the magazine? We've done a hell of a lot in the past 70 issues, and some of the subject matter in the current issue and future issues that we have lined up should hopefully prove to you that there are still plenty of articles that will catch your attention.

Now all I need is that *Strider* making of and I can hang up my coat…

Enjoy the magazine.

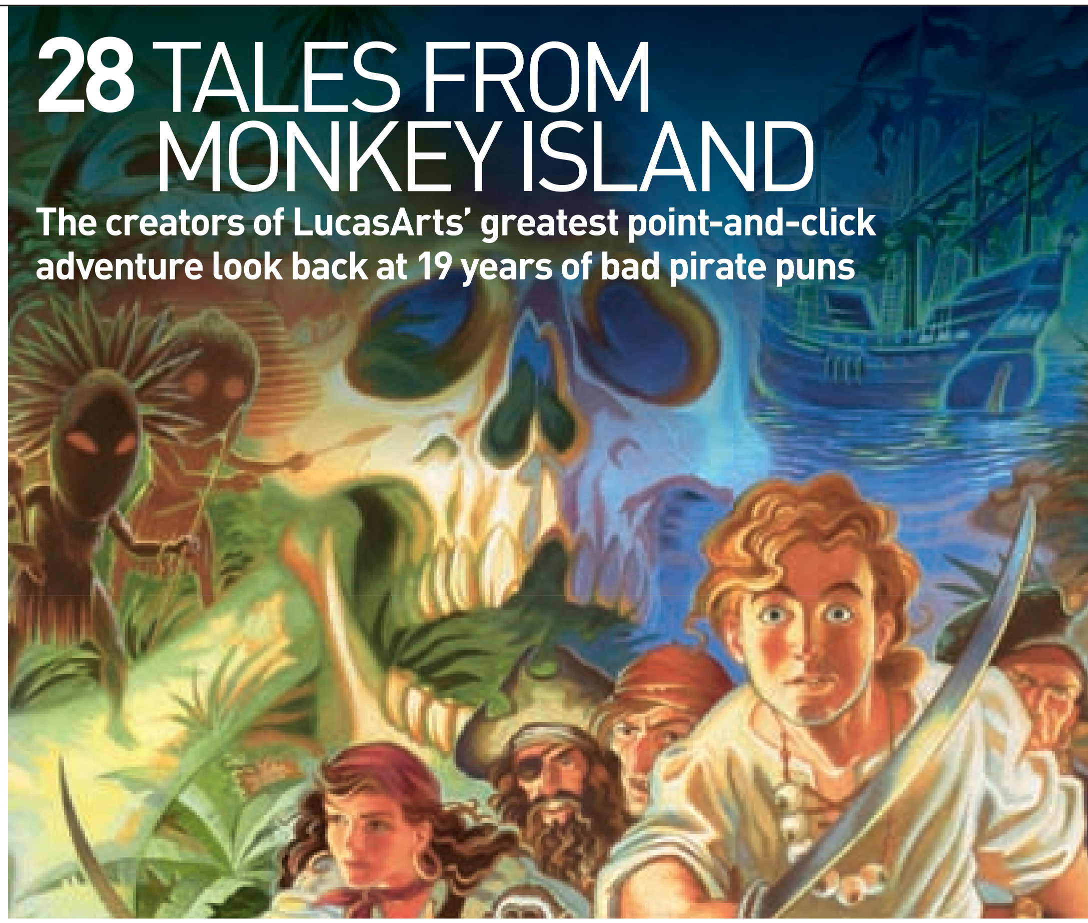


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» **Load 70** Breathing new life into classic games

FEATURED

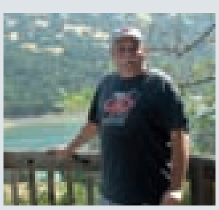


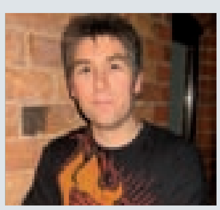
RETRO REVIVALS

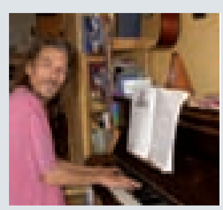




In the hotseat this month…







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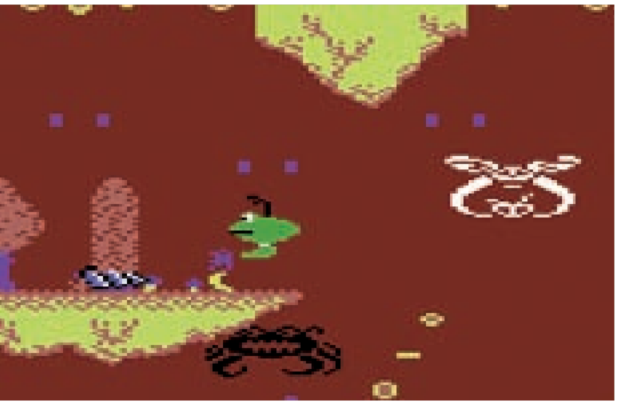
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"Hours of frustrating fun are yours for the taking"

Craig Grannell

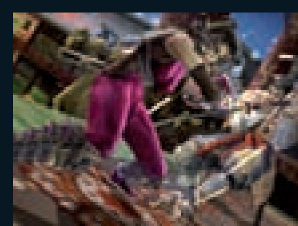


46 Classic Game

Craig Grannell loves gribblets. In fact, he loves them so much that he happened to take one of them on a magical day out

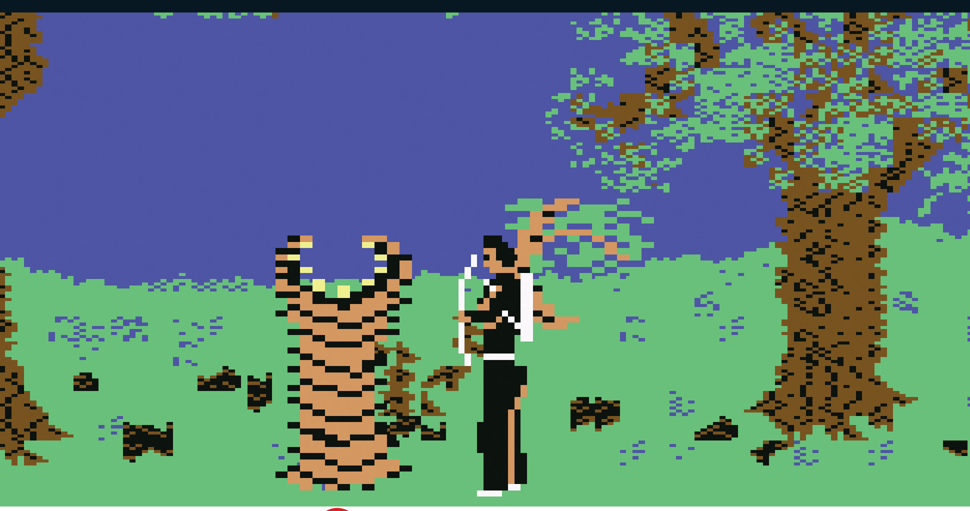
ESSENTIALS

RETRO RATED

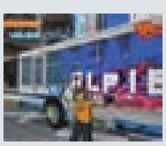


48 SCARY GAMES

Thought that all scary videogames began and ended with Capcom's *Resident Evil*? Shame on you!

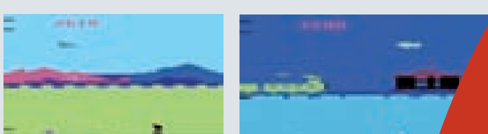


retro GAMER.net READER'S REVIVAL



26 BOBBY'S GOING HOME

Reader Craig Hawkins states his case for this obscure Atari 2600 release.



Get online now!

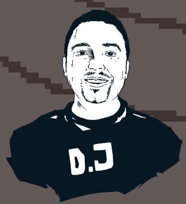
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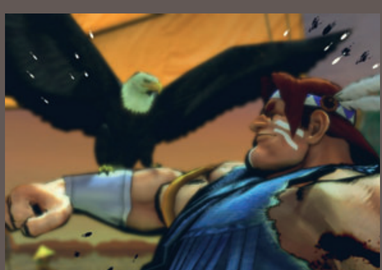
retro radar

» GIVE US TWO MINUTES AND WE'LL GIVE YOU THE RETRO WORLD



» Another month, another juicy selection of retro-related gossip. Easily the most impressive is Sega's exciting new online portal that should make playing classics an absolute breeze, but we're also amazingly excited about Capcom's Super Street Fighter IV announcement…

* CONTENTS





» [Mega Drive] No more excuses for playing dodgy versions of classic *Sonic* games.

★ GO DEEPER

- » A new way to pay for and play retro content legally.
- » No pay-per-game – one subscription to the service lets you play all available games as much as you want.
- » A natty Sega Saturn USB joypad for subscribers.

TO BE THIS SAVVY TAKES SEGA

SEGA LAUNCHES PLAYSEGA – A NEW WAY TO PLAY RETRO CONTENT

Coming soon, PlaySEGA is a new online gaming portal that allows you to play a number of classic Sega titles – as well as a number of original Flash games – on your PC via in-browser emulation. The service, which is presently in a beta state, is free to register for and takes minutes to set up. Just visit www.playsega.com, input a few details about yourself into the site's registration form, click send, await a nice email inviting you to the service, click on the link to complete your registration, and away you go. Job done.

The portal seems to be a spin on the 'gaming on-demand' models like Gaikai and OnLive, and offers a new way to play and emulate retro games legally. While there is likely to be some naysayers that will see this as an attempt by Sega to squeeze more money from its classic games, if Sega takes the watershed decision to move away from releasing retro compilation packs in future and instead make its entire back catalogue available on the web – for a subscription, of course – then this could prove to be a deft move. After all, a complete Sega library available at the click of a mouse button can only be a good thing, right?

We signed up and had a quick play around with it and were impressed with the clean layout and simplicity of navigating through the portal. There were 25 free online games available at the time of writing, with many more planned. We were also impressed by the sheer amount of Sega content that has already found its way to the service. *Streets Of Rage 1* and *2*, *Ecco The Dolphin*, *Sonic The Hedgehog* – oh, and there's also a brilliant *Sonic* level creator too – and even the Treasure classics *Gunstar Heroes* and *Dynamite Headdy*, to name just a few, are already on the website, and there's also a couple of classic Sega arcade games. We've been told that there could be commitment from Sega to add every hardware platform through browser-based emulation, which means that we could potentially see Saturn and Dreamcast titles heading to the service in the near future.

'So what about saving your progress in games?' we hear you cry. Well, thankfully the bods at Sega have that covered too. Each game will offer save states, which will, of course, prove invaluable for chipping away at some of the larger games on your lunch break. But whether these save states are to



Ins & outs of PlaySEGA

» What to expect from Sega's new service



Level creators

Currently there are two level creators on the site, and it's likely Sega will add more as time goes on. Using a simple level construction tool, players can actually build their very own *Sonic* stages, fill it with *Sonic* furniture and then publish it online for their friends to laugh at and/or play.



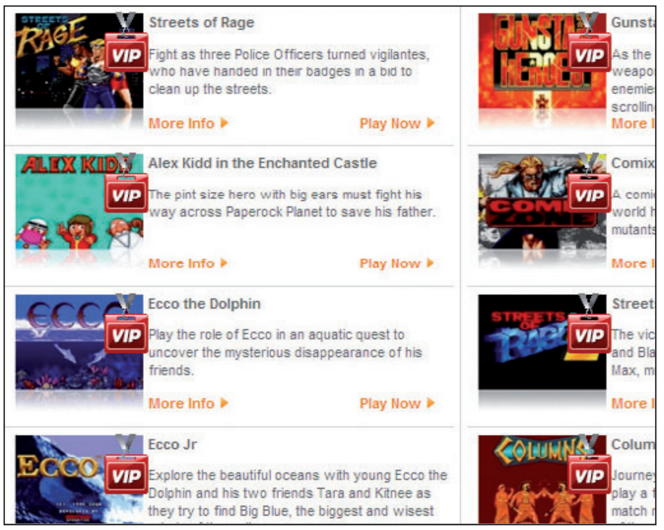
Win stuff

One of the best things about the service is that you can actually earn money for playing games – well, sort of. Basically playing games and earning high scores will earn you Sonic Rings, and these can be exchanged for chances to enter weekly cash draws.



Games

The bread and butter of the PlaySEGA service is the games. Some of them are free to play, but most of the good stuff – actually nearly all of the good stuff – requires you to sign up to the VIP service. Here's hoping that Sega does decide to make some of the older content free to play.



» Just some of the Mega Drive games now playing on PlaySEGA.



» The service allows you to personalise your browser with these avatars, and even purchase them a nice-looking crib.



take the form of pre-determined saves or you'll be given the option to save your progress and/or store multiple games on the service is yet to be confirmed.

One of the other unique points about PlaySEGA is that customers who sign up to the service will receive a welcome gift of 10,000 virtual Sonic Rings – see what they've done there? – which act like a virtual currency on the website. These Rings can be spent on dressing up a cartoon-looking avatar, and if you're feeling especially flush, you can also treat him or her to a lavish-looking 'escape' – basically a virtual home – to live out their virtual days in. We didn't bother squandering our preciouses on a crib for our virtual self, though. Why? Well because he's virtual, of course, and thus wouldn't understand nor appreciate the difference between a night at Claridges or a grubby bedsit. Besides, the Rings, which you earn through playing games and smashing high scores, can also be used to enter weekly cash draws – a far better use of our virtual money, in our opinion. Furthermore, the avatars and escapes can also be used to chat with other users who have registered on the site.

> **"A complete Sega library available at the click of a mouse can only be a good thing"**

For a subscription fee, which ranges from a single month for £4.99 to a year for £12.99, the website also allows VIP unrestricted access to everything it has to offer. This also gives paying users the power to circumvent annoying web ads, unlock exclusive threads for their avatar, and even earn double the number of Rings when playing games too. Plus, for a limited time, those who sign up to the service for three months or more will receive a free Saturn USB pad to play the games with on their computer.

If we had one small concern about the site, it was that nearly all of the Sega content was made available to VIP customers, with a large quotient of the pro-bono content made up of Flash games. Hopefully Sega's long-term plan is to slowly cascade its classic games down to everyone who registers after a set period of time, or maybe even unlock specific Sega games at certain dates to keep people coming back to the site. Of course, it's still early days yet, and the site is still in a beta state, after all, but if Sega really gets behind it, we reckon that this could hold real potential. *

THE RETRO DEBATE

» What would you like to see on PlaySEGA?

VISIT RETROGAMER.NET/FORUM TO HAVE YOUR SAY

JetSetWilly
Can I vote for all?

thevulture
Strider. Need I say more?

lostSUNDAY
Hmm, hard call. *Ranger X*… maybe.

jdanddiet
Tough call but I went for *Revenge Of Shinobi.* Love that game!

rossi46
I have *Strider* on every platform imaginable. Mr Hiryu is a tad over-exposed, I reckon. *Ranger X* for me, then. Criminally underrated.

sscott
Another corporate bloody link-up. Honestly, you can play these games so many different ways already and Sega has come up with another way to milk its over-exposed games/franchises.

TwoHeadedBoy
I voted *ToeJam & Earl.* The site looks interesting, yep. There are loads of games I already have, but the level creator and the USB pad look enticing. And *Chu Chu Rocket* as well – maybe more Dreamcast games?

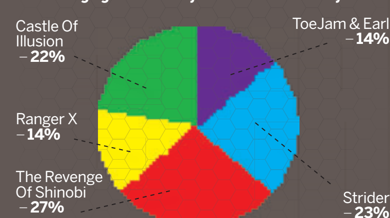
felgekarp
Anything bar *Strider.*

Rinoa
Castle Of Illusion for me.

Darran
I personally think this is a fantastic idea. I don't have space for every old Mega Drive game, but this is a perfectly sound alternative to me if the emulation is spot-on, which it appears to be. I'd like to see more companies taking this approach.

FORUM OPINION

Which Sega game would you like to see on PlaySEGA?



retro columns

» RETRO RECOLLECTIONS WITH CELEB IAIN LEE

Here's the bio...
Iain Lee has been a fervent gamer since he was tiny. And that was a long time ago. In between playing computer games and collecting crap from eBay, he has presented Channel 4's *The 11 O'Clock Show* and *Rise*, and currently does bits of stand-up as well as presenting *The Sunday Night* show on Absolute Radio at 10pm.



Hi there, my name's **Iain Lee**. You might remember me from Thumb Bandits, The 11 O'Clock Show and Absolute Radio, but now I'm here to confess my love for retro

Lost In Translation

I'm writing my column early this month because in two days time I am going to Japan. My wife wanted to go later in the year, but I persuaded her we should arrive on Friday 25 September because I might get some work in October and I wouldn't want to miss it.

About an hour after booking the trip, I burst into the bedroom saying, "Oh my god, you won't believe this. The weekend we arrive in Japan, they'll be holding the Tokyo Game Show! What an amazing coincidence. We really must try to get tickets."

Fandango was not best pleased.

Japan really is the home of videogames. Yeah, you could argue that its real birthplace is Massachusetts or California, but Japan is were they went mental for videogames and still do in a way that no other country does. Have you seen the queues for a *Monster Hunter* release? They go bonkers over what is a pretty poor game.

I was in Japan and the States about nine years ago interviewing some of the key figures in videogame history, and man, do those two countries have different attitudes. In America it was all very laid back: 'Hey, come over to my house. We'll play on my *Asteroids* cab and chat.' Japan was the opposite. Every interview had to go through several committees for approval. And there would always be about six or seven people behind the camera monitoring EVERYTHING.

I was dead excited to meet Toru Iwatani, the man behind *Pac-Man*. It was the strangest interview ever. The suits were there to make sure he toed the line and repeated that nonsense story about eating a piece of pizza and thinking, 'Hey, this could be a brilliant videogame!'

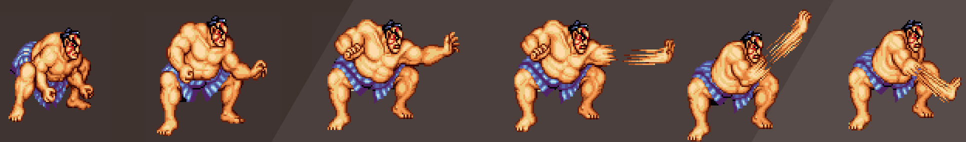
Iwatani-san was a lovely man but seemed terrified. He was very sweaty, a little shaky and not especially confident. Hey, maybe he was a huge *11 O'Clock Show* fan and nerves got the better of him, but I had the feeling he was scared of his bosses and terrified of saying the wrong thing. He kept looking at them for approval, which they gave with a very sharp nod. No crazy thumbs up in Nihon!

The only time he relaxed was when he saw my pathetic attempts to play the game. I genuinely love it, but I'm crap at it. He laughed and brushed me to one side as if to say, 'Watch this.' Of course, he was superb. (I say, of course, that I actually destroyed Tomohiro Nishikado at *Space Invaders*, even when he was trying to cheat with the old Nagoya method. Naughty Tomohiro.)

I doubt when I go this time that I'll meet any characters like Iwatani-san, but I am excited to see how they do a games show. I shall be looking for the suits lurking in every corner, nodding slowly in approval or, heaven forbid, shaking their heads. One can only imagine what hideous fate befalls the poor sod that lets down the bosses of a Japanese games company.

> Iwatani-san seemed scared of his bosses and terrified of saying the wrong thing

Worst game ever played? I thought *Twin Kingdom Valley* on the BBC was pretty cack.





CLASSIC REVIEWER



BIO

Name:
Phil King
First Magazine:
Crash
Role:
Staff Writer
Favourite Game:
Skool Daze
Favourite System:
Spectrum

What's your favourite game?
Skool Daze on the Spectrum. It was highly original, with quite a bit of humour. I was still at school when it came out, so I loved firing catapults at teachers. It was also great how you could edit all the names in the game to those of your real teachers. Take that, Mr Lomas!

Favourite system?
It has to be the Spectrum, the first computer I ever owned. I never upgraded from the classic rubber-keyed model, even though I had to replace the keyboard membrane several times due to over-enthusiastic key-mashing on *Daley Thompson's Decathlon*.

Best press trip you've been on?
We never seemed to go on any exotic trips, so I'd have to say an outing for the launch of *Destruction Derby*. We did banger racing in some clapped-out Ford Escorts. It was great fun, if a bit dangerous – one of our guys rolled his car and I think another caught fire.

Best mag you've worked on?
Sorry to all the Spectrum die-hards, but I'd have to say *Zzap!*. We had a fantastic, closely knit team in our little office.

Best person you've met in the videogame industry?
Jon Hare is a really lovely, generous chap. All the Sensible Software guys were really great. I remember us all going to their HQ to compete in the first *Sensible Soccer* World Cup – which I won!

How have games magazines changed over the years?
The technological changes have been huge. We had a photographer to take screenshots with a camera in a darkened room. There was no desktop publishing either – we had to take a disk of text to a printing firm and they'd print it out on rolls of paper, which the designers would then literally cut and paste into a layout.



» New character Juri is one of several additions to the *Street Fighter IV* roster.

RETURN OF THE KING

STREET FIGHTER IV RETURNS WITH EXCITING NEW – AND OLD – CHARACTERS

We should have seen it coming, but we're still amazingly excited about Capcom's recent announcement of *Super Street Fighter IV*.

Rumours began circulating before the big reveal at the Tokyo Game Show, with an alleged leak from Capcom insiders promising an additional ten characters. The pugilists in question were Dee Jay and T Hawk from *Super Street Fighter II*; Adon, Guy and Cody from the *Alpha* series; and *3rd Strike*'s Dudley, Makoto and Ibuki. In addition, two new characters were also mentioned: Hakan, an Arabic grappler; and Juri, who, along with Dee Jay and T Hawk, has already been officially confirmed by Capcom.

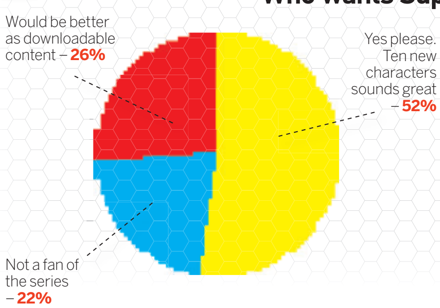
As well as including a solid selection of new fighters, *Super Street Fighter IV* will also add new Ultra Combos and greatly refines the fighting engine and online side of the game. Capcom is also keen on delivering this sequel/update at a lower price tag than the original game, which is bound to mollify those cynics who have already suggested that this is nothing more than a lazy update from Capcom and should be treated as downloadable content.

So far the leaked list of characters appears to be true, but that doesn't stop us hoping that *Street Fighter III*'s Hugo is going to get announced before the game's 360 and PS3 debut early next year. Thanks to the likes of *Tekken 6*, *BlazBlue*, the XBLA version of *Marvel vs Capcom 2* and, of course, *Street Fighter IV* itself, the beat-'em-up genre is undergoing a massive resurgence. If only the shoot-'em-up, our other favourite classic genre, was down for receiving the same attention… *

FORUM OPINION

VISIT RETROGAMER.NET/FORUM TO HAVE YOUR SAY

Who wants Super Street Fighter IV?



Hah! Not this bloody time, Capcom. I think I'll wait for *Super Street Fighter IV Turbo*.
– Sal Feena

I'm already excited by the new update and it will persuade those who already played *Street Fighter IV* to come back for more.
– thl

MICRO BYTES

Snippets of news from the exciting world of retro



» How It Works

Imagine Publishing has launched a brand new magazine dedicated to understanding the world of science. *How It Works* is an entertaining look at science and technology and takes a fun, inventive look at all kinds of specialist topics. The monthly publication is available now and can be purchased from all good newsagents and the Imagine eShop at **www.imagineshop.co.uk**.



» Shenmue III?

Of course not, but the recent announcement of Ryo Hazuki in *Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing* has certainly thrown the internet into a frenzy. Looking extremely cool – and dare we say it, just a little out of place – Ryo is able to switch between his trusty motorcycle and a forklift truck whenever his special is activated. Is Sega testing the waters for a third *Shenmue* or just teasing us. Who knows? Looks great, though.



» Retro Fusion returns

Chris Wilkins has announced that a new issue of popular fanzine *Retro Fusion* should be here by Christmas. Covering all aspects of retro and featuring famous faces including Archer MacLean and Jon Hare, the third issue will be 68 pages in length and feature an interview with *Red Dwarf*'s Chris Barrie, the making of *Starglider* and plenty of other goodies. Pre-order now at **www.retrofusion.me.uk**.

retro columns

» PAUL DAVIES GIVES HIS VIEWS ON THE RETRO WORLD

Here's my bio...
In 1992 I started out on *Mean Machines Sega* and *Nintendo Magazine System*. In 1995 I became editor of *C&VG*. I led the *C&VG* website from 1998 until Christmas 2000, then I left journalism to be concept design manager at Criterion Games. I returned to journalism in 2002 and from 2005 I've been running my own company, Unlikely Hero.



Hello, retro gamers. My name is **Paul Davies**. I used to be the editor of C&VG and have also worked on a number of classic gaming magazines over the years

What Does It Do?

Crappy simulators couldn't be classed as games because they were ugly and boring

This month I heard the following revelation from a group of elderly relatives: "We used to have trampoline on the radio, and a ventriloquist." I'm quite sure that the two events were unrelated, but even that wouldn't have surprised me. The conversation was about kids' entertainment before most people had TV, let alone TV games.

Apparently the ventriloquist was highly respected, and even took his mannequin into the studio for his show. It wasn't until the guy's long-awaited TV debut that he was revealed to be completely crap as a ventriloquist and… err, giggen ge goot.

I mention this because it's funny, right? But also that it reminds me of the kind of ambition we originally had and still have today for videogames, even if sometimes the thing you end up spending time with is not ideal material. Retro gamers are used to giving most ideas a try, if only to laugh about it later. In games, I mean…

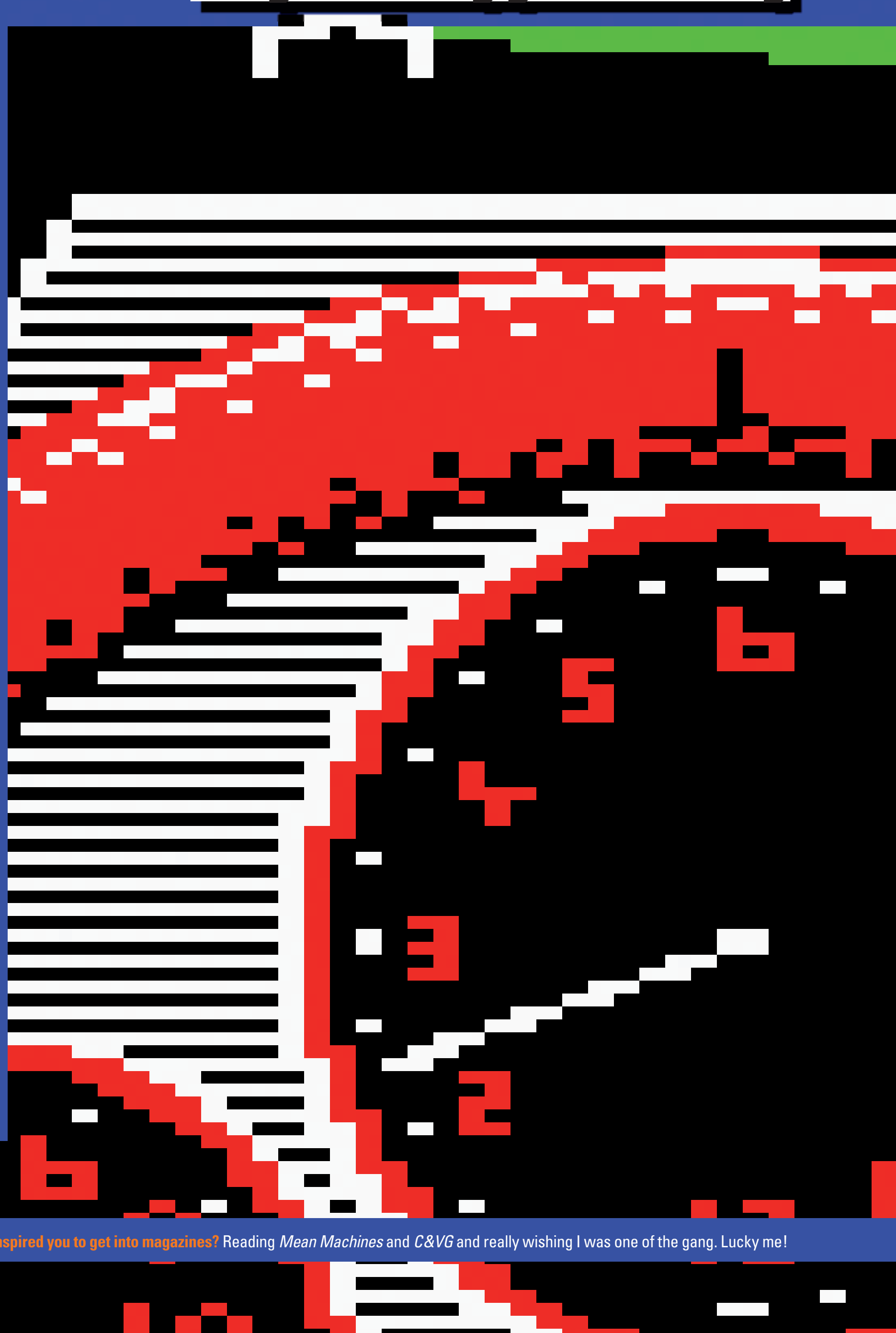
In the very early days we had such faith in the Dragon 32, ZX Spectrum and – if you were posh – BBC Micro that we believed wholeheartedly in a fully authentic *Space Shuttle* and the racing simulator *Revs*. These things were actually agonising to endure, but the general belief among ye olde kids was that the microchip could do anything – including homework if your parents should ask – so roll on whatever the games gurus could imagine next.

Even at that time, however, I was taking the view that crappy simulators couldn't be classed as games because they were ugly and boring, and required strips of paper on the keyboard to remind you what everything did… as if I cared. But everything was classed as a computer game in those days, so you had to be careful.

As one of gaming's greatest gurus, Peter Molyneux said recently: "Games have to move on." I think it's brilliant that videogames, digital entertainment, and now iPhone apps are still swirling around in this uniquely unfathomable sea, or limitless universe if you prefer. Nothing in 'computer entertainment' has settled for a second since *Spacewar!* in 1962 – which I am too young to remember, thank you.

I also think it's curious that, even now, there are people that still think games are all the same and have decided not to like them. I'm not saying they're wrong to assume that *Gran Turismo 5* falls into the same bag as *Peggle*, nor that it is better to try actual swordfighting than bother with *Wii Sports Resort*. It's just funny to still perceive a situation where you have the gamers and then everyone else.

Things move so fast in the world of videogames that you're a retro gamer whether you're playing *Amidar* or the latest *Call Of Duty*. Despite the best efforts of Sony, Microsoft and Nintendo, this whole business is always likely to appear as the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry to the uninitiated.



What inspired you to get into magazines? Reading *Mean Machines* and *C&VG* and really wishing I was one of the gang. Lucky me!

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Retro Booty

TREASURES FROM THE RETRO DEEP



Super Mario Bros Chocolate Egg

- **RRP:** £1.79
- **Manufacturer:** Furuta
- **Buy it from:** www.play-asia.com

Yes, we know Easter is months away, but this Kinder-Egg-like chocolate-covered capsule toy could make a great gift idea for a chocolate-loving Mario fanatic. Unwrap the egg, feast on the chocolaty goodness and, hey presto, a baby Mario.

1up Beanie

- **RRP:** $12.99 (£8 approx)
- **Manufacturer:** Unknown
- **Buy it from:** www.thinkgeek.com

With the winter months fast approaching, your head is likely to start feeling the bitter side of Mother Nature's character. Prepare by retaining warmth of your brain with these stylish 1up mushroom embroidered beanie hats.



Pac-Man Lap Trap

- **RRP:** £19.99
- **Manufacturer:** KICO Products
- **Buy it from:** www.amazon.co.uk

Are you finding that balancing piping hot food on your knees is causing the skin on your legs to blister and peel? Then save yourself numerous trips to casualty by forking out £19.99 for this neat Pac-Man lap tray.

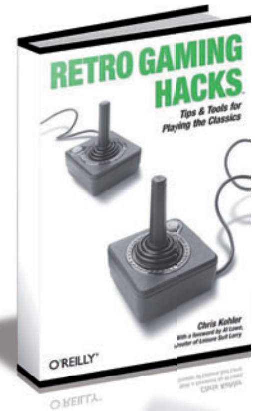


Galaxy Cosmic Multi Game Arcade Machine

- **RRP:** £1,595
- **Manufacturer:** Galaxy
- **Buy it from:** www.amazon.co.uk

There's nowt cooler than owning your very own arcade machine, it's the ultimate trophy for any self-respecting 'man cave'. So why not dig deep into you kids' inheritance and splash out £1,595 for this colourful arcade cabinet by Galaxy, which comes pre-loaded with 40 classic arcade games.





Retro Gaming Hacks: Tips & Tools For Playing The Classics

- **RRP:** £19.54
- **Publisher:** O'Reilly Media Inc
- **Buy it from:** www.amazon.co.uk

Heading to Fun Spot this Christmas to take on Billy Mitchell's *DK* high score? Then you may want to arm yourself with a copy of this book. It'll save you plenty of salty tears when you eventually reach the first 'rivet' screen in *Donkey Kong*.



Sonic The Hedgehog Speed Pack

- **RRP:** £14.99
- **Manufacturer:** Venom
- **Buy it from:** www.amazon.co.uk

Presumably this 'speed pack' is for DS owners who play while running very fast (not recommended). The pack contains headphones, a carry case, Game Boy-style plastic game cases, screen protectors, wrist straps and a cleaning pad.

Retro Badges

- **RRP:** £1.79
- **Manufacturer:** Unknown
- **Buy it from:** www.videogameimports.com

Badges are pretty handy, not only can they kill balloons but they can also cover up holes in garments. If this problem is in your life at the moment, then solve the dilemma with these retro badges, emblazoned with images of *OutRun* and *Puyo Puyo*.



TREASURE OF THE MONTH



The 8-Bit Book 1981 To 199X

- **RRP:** £17.99
- **Publisher:** Hiive Books
- **Buy it from:** http://www.hiivebooks.com/

The final entry in the *Golden Years* series, this hefty and wonderfully presented book by author Jerry Ellis covers over two hundred of the most influential home computer games of the 8-bit era and takes you on a nostalgic trip back through the gaming ages. It features a heady array of game reviews, including entries for the likes of the Acorn, Spectrum, Amstrad, MSX and Apple II. Every chapter highlights the seminal titles of a particular year and opens with an interesting introduction to the events of that 12 months, offering a concise summation of the videogames industry at the time. *The 8-Bit Book* is a varied and a highly informative read, and would make an ideal stocking filler for the wife this Christmas.



Zangief Statue

- **RRP:** £399.99
- **Manufacturer:** Unknown
- **Buy it from:** www.play.com

This Zangief statue stands tall at an imposing 18 inches, and is the perfect desk ornament to scare away spiders, or tiny bears. It's made of polystone, comes dressed in actual pants, and has two interchangeable heads.



Pac-Man Hotplate Holder

- **RRP:** $14.99 (£9.23 approx)
- **Manufacturer:** Unknown
- **Buy it from:** www.thinkgeek.com

Do away with conventional oven mitts, which can easily stain, and instead carry your steaming hotplates from the oven and safely to your recently purchased KICO Pac-Man lap tray with this handy hotplate holder in the shape of Pac-Man.

Pass our knowledge off as your own



iPad

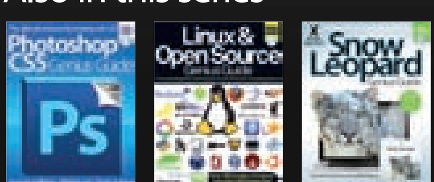
Printed full colour large format book

Kindle

Genius Guide™

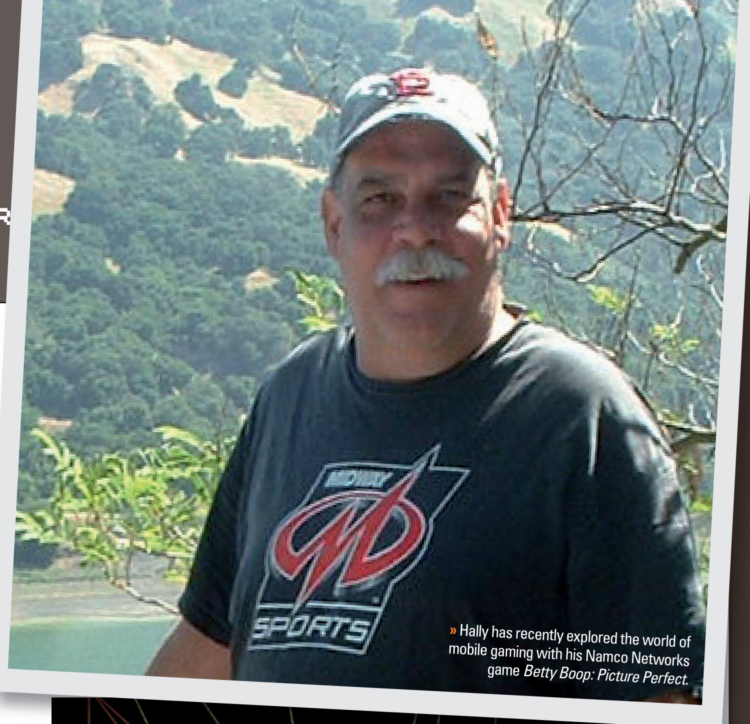
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» Hally has recently explored the world of mobile gaming with his Namco Networks game *Betty Boop: Picture Perfect*.

★ A MOMENT WITH...

Mike Hally

Every issue, we put an industry legend in the hot seat. This month we got to sit down with Atari's Mike Hally

Who is Mike Hally?

He's worked in the industry for 30 years and initially found success at Atari. After moving to the coin-op division he worked on hits such as *Star Wars, Road Runner, S.T.U.N. Runner* and *Gauntlet Legends*

Which of your games would you recommend to our readers and why?
Well, I've recently finished a mobile phone game for Namco Networks called *Betty Boop: Picture Perfect*, which I'm quite proud of. It is basically an animated puzzle videogame featuring the popular cartoon star and sees her performing a variety of fun tasks. Check it out.

What is your proudest memory?
There are two things that really stick in my mind. Back in 1983 I was lucky enough to design the *Star Wars* coin-op for Atari, which was massively successful, plus my daughter Andrea was born. Needless to say it was a very special time for me.

What's the most difficult thing you've encountered while working on a game?
There are a lot of things that can be really difficult, but I'd have to say that one of the biggest challenges is continually keeping the team motivated and believing in the product. Not easy, especially when you're often surrounded by doubters.

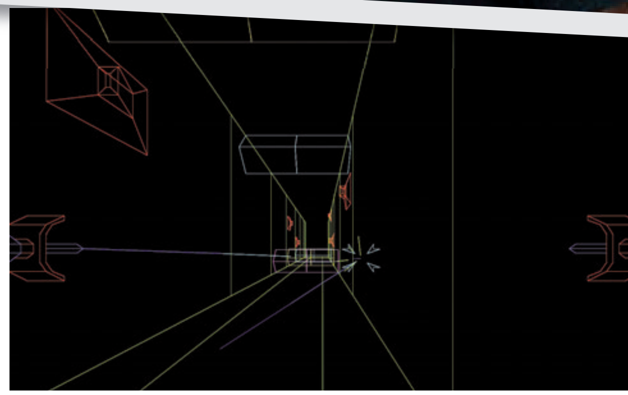
Which industry veteran do you admire the most?
It would have to be Eugene Jarvis of Atari and Williams fame. I was lucky enough to work with Eugene during my days at Atari and we have been friends ever since. Amazingly, he is still making coin-op games today.

How would you like your games to be remembered?
I'd love all my games to be seen as classics, one of a kind, ingenious, super fun and challenging. That's not really a lot to ask, is it?

Which games do you wish you'd made?
There are so, so many, but if I had to make hard choices then I would put both *Missile Command* and *Paperboy* at the very top of my list. They're both fantastic, playable games and horribly addictive.

What opportunities has making videogames given you?
Oh, far too many to list here. Some of my favourites, however, are when I get asked to speak at various videogame conventions and that I had the opportunity to retire at a very young age, which was nice.

> “I went into work one day and the entire division had been let go and the place was empty”



» [*Star Wars*] 1983 was a very special year for Hally: the *Star Wars* coin-op was born, and so was his daughter.



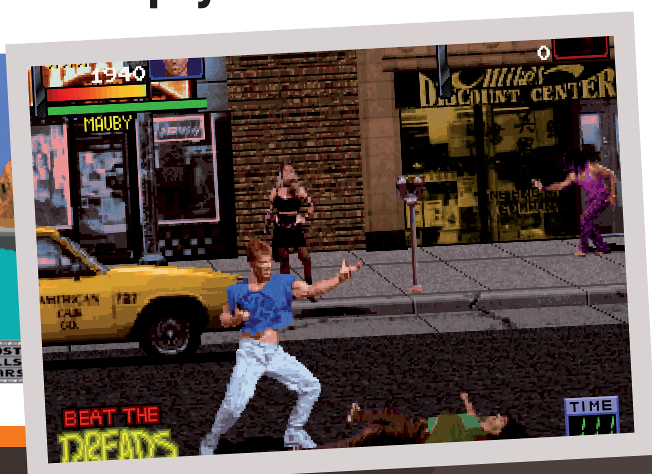
What's your darkest memory of being in the industry?
Lay-offs always used to be the worst if I'm brutally honest. There's nothing worse than when they occur and friends, co-workers and production staff get cut from the final list. It's very sad.

And your best?
The fact that I've been able to make lots of great friends over the years and that I've been given the opportunity to make fun, enjoyable games for what is now 30 years.

Can you share one interesting anecdote about your time in the industry?
Well, I remember one time very vividly. I went into work as usual one day and the entire division had actually been let go and the place was empty. They had forgotten to tell me that I had been transferred from the pinball division to the coin-op, which was why no one was there. What a life-changing day that became for me.

How has the industry changed over the last 20 years?
Where do I begin? How about the fact that there is cheaper, far more powerful hardware; there has been a huge move from arcades to home entertainment; and that impressive online capabilities are now available? ★







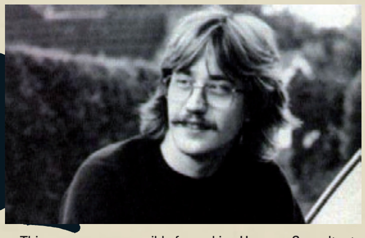
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BACK TO THE EIGHTIES

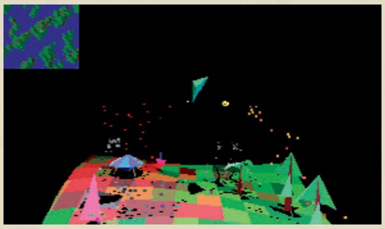
THE LATEST NEWS FROM OCTOBER 1987



OCTOBER 1987 – Pac is back, Automata returns, ACE is here, Games Machine too, coin-op conversions everywhere, Zarch on the Arch and Virgin responsible for a Complete Bastard. Richard Burton goes and builds up his Fartometer for maximum savouriness…



» This man was responsible for making Hewson Consultants great… No, really, he was…



» [Acorn Archimedes] Simply the best game released on the Archimedes. Great graphics – great everything.



» [BBC] Great game – albeit fiddly controls – and a more than worthy sequel to the original *Stryker's Run*.

The first news reports of the *Personal Computer World* Show held at London's Olympia began filtering through into the press, and with a reported 80,000 people having visited the three-day show, it came as no surprise to find all the big boys showing off their newest developments and finished articles.

US Gold had bagged a trio of coin-op conversion licences and promised that its home computer versions of *Out Run*, *720°* and *Gauntlet II* would be coming out in time for Santa to empty his sack down your chimney. Press reports on the first impressions of *Out Run* were favourable. Oh, how very wrong they were…

Other companies joining the coin-op conversion frenzy were Elite, which had *Buggy Boy* near to completion, and Ocean, with its versions of *Renegade* and *Rastan Saga*. Also weighing in was Firebird with *Flying Shark*, while Electric Dreams demonstrated two projects under development: *Super Sprint* and *Super Hang-On*. Christmas 1987 certainly looked like a good one for software retailers and games players alike…

The driving force behind Graftgold, Andrew Braybrook and Steve Turner, revealed that they had finally severed their long-standing ties with Hewson Consultants. Having been responsible for many of Hewson's hits such as *Dragontorc* and *Ranarama*, the pair announced that they would be working for Telecomsoft, British Telecom's software arm, as it would give them a "more stable and profitable base than Hewson". Bad news for Hewson; great news for BT.

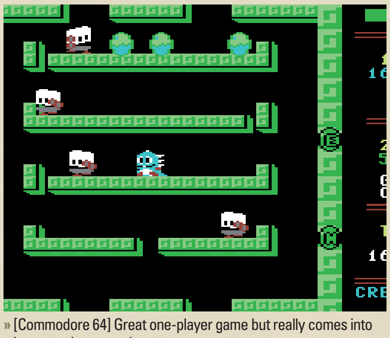


» *ACE* and *The Games Machine* were released in the same month and promised much the same sort of multiformat content.

Pac-Man was back. A Quicksilva press release disclosed that it had secured the rights to convert the arcade game *Pac-Land*. The spherical yellow fellow had mutated somewhat, having developed arms and legs, and he puts his new limbs to good use by attempting to return a lost fairy to Fairyland by transporting her under his hat through the various platform-style screens of his hometown of Pac-Land.

Once that's done, Pac-Man receives a pair of magic flying shoes and returns home to his Pac-Family, only to find another fairy in distress. Someone somewhere has been downing quantities of super-strength power pills… The *Pac-Land* conversions turned out to be a mixed bag quality-wise: Spectrum okay, C64 excellent and Amiga poor.

And from *Pac-Man* to Pi-Man with the news that Interceptor Micros had bought the rights to Automata, several of its games, and image rights to Pi-Man. It planned to use the Automata label to launch a new series of adventure games, with the first offerings being *Sword Of Kings* and *Asiento*, both on the Spectrum.

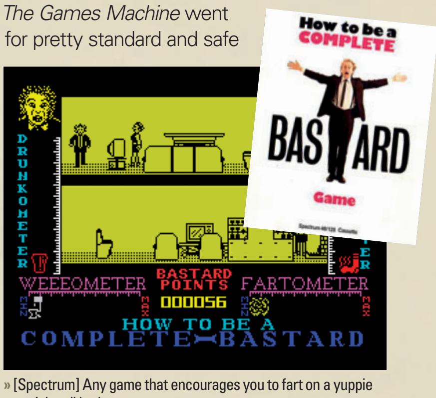


» [Commodore 64] Great one-player game but really comes into its own when two players team up.

Choosing Automata for this project, having been a progressive and creative software house, seemed to be an odd association. Predictably, nothing was ever released by the new Automata and a good job too, as it would have had Mel Croucher spinning in his grave, had he been dead.

Let's get ready to multiformat games magazine rumble! In the red corner, weighing in at 100 pages and represented by Future Publishing, the mighty *ACE*. In the blue corner, trained by Newfield Publications and tipping the scales at 132 pages, *The Games Machine*.

With the big two publishers both launching their first multiformat magazines in the same month, it would be interesting to see who got out of the blocks quicker. *The Games Machine* went for pretty standard and safe



» [Spectrum] Any game that encourages you to fart on a yuppie can't be all bad…

1987

OCTOBER NEWS



» John Kettley is a weatherman, a weatherman, a weatherman, John Kettley is a weatherman and so is Michael Fish.

16-17 October saw Britain lashed by a fierce storm causing widespread destruction with its hurricane-force winds. With the storm coming into full effect during the night, it came as a surprise to many.

Almost as famous as the storm was the BBC and Met Office's weatherman Michael Fish, who was made a scapegoat for the inaccurate weather forecast.

In total 18 people lost their lives, with several hundred hurt by debris. Also, 15 million trees were destroyed, with the town of Sevenoaks temporarily becoming Oneoak after the storm accounted for six of the famous trees.

19 October saw Black Monday on Wall Street. Panic selling of stocks led to financial meltdown, and by the end of the day the Dow Jones nose-dived by over 500 points, a drop of 22.5 per cent.



» *Dirty Dancing* is released. Could be worse: it could have been *Dirty Dancing 2*…

This led to stock market crashes across the globe, with the FTSE suffering a 26 per cent fall and other world markets faring worse still. What was more worrying was that there was no warning, and one factor couldn't pinpoint the reason for the collapse.

With all the chaos, could things get any worse? 19 October saw the UK release of *Dirty Dancing*, starring the late Patrick Swayze. So that's a yes, then…



» [Commodore 64] Despite the bizarre back story, *Pac-Land* was a thoroughly enjoyable platform game on most systems.

fare with a console comparison feature but also ventured into entertainment territory with a look at the latest kids' TV programme *Knightmare* and a feature on CD-ROMs.

ACE countered with a console comparison feature too and took an excursion into music-making and MIDI. It also introduced the oddest games rating system: the Predicted Interest Curve. It was an attempt to gauge how long the game would hold your interest within a timescale ranging from one minute to one year. Gimmicky, but executed in an adult tone to make you think it was actually a serious measurement.

New out this month was *Zarch* by Superior Software for the Acorn Archimedes and written by the author of *Elite*, David Braben. It originally started life as a demonstration game called *Lander*, which came bundled with the Archimedes to illustrate its power.



» [Amstrad] Nice loading screen, crap game. The graphics were similar to gluing pieces of Lego to your monitor. Yep – that bad…

The game was later developed into a superb shoot-'em-up in which you had to defend the landscape from alien invasion. Graphically superb, *Zarch* was the best £19.95 you could spend on your Archie.

Virgin Games rattled the cages of fretful parents and Mary Whitehouse alike with the release of *How To Be A Complete Bastard*, based on the book by Adrian Edmondson. It was a reasonably absorbing arcade adventure, which saw you attempting to wreck a yuppie party by any antisocial means possible. Farting and poo were aplenty, so all very British stuff…

It featured just about everything it could to cause priggish do-gooders utter consternation, such as a split-screen technique called Bastavision and the inclusion of a Fartometer and Weeometer. Yes, they measure exactly what you think they measure. It was available on the big three 8-bit machines: the Commode 64, Sinclair Rectum and Bumstrad.

Computer & Video Games felt a warm fuzzy feeling about *Bubble Bobble* and *Druid* (both Firebird, both C64), both clambering to the heights of Game of the Month, while the lesser *C&VG* Hit was bestowed upon *Addictaball* (Alligata, Atari ST), *Last Mission* (US Gold, Spectrum), *Ace II* (Cascade, C64), *Death Wish III* (Gremlin Graphics, Amstrad), *Codename Droid* (Superior Software, BBC), *The Faery Tale Adventure* (Microillusions, Amiga), *Road Runner* (US Gold, Atari ST), *Impact* (Audiogenic, Atari ST) and *Stationfall* (Activision/Infocom, Apple II).

THIS MONTH IN…

ZZAP!64



The first part of a series highlighting the early days of the shoot-'em-up on the C64 began this month, with Julian Rignall looking back at his personal favourites among those early pioneering efforts. There was a right old mixed bag of quality, ranging from *Annihilator* (Rabbit) to *Choplifter* (Broderbund).



YOUR SINCLAIR



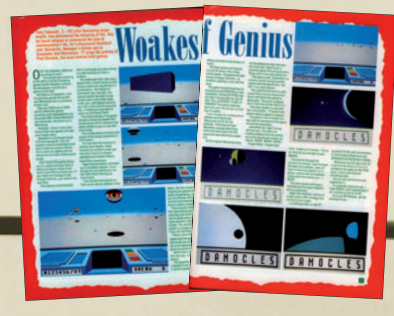
October was a fine month for *Your Sinclair*, with arguably its best cover-mounted game ever. Elite's *Batty*, the *Arkanoid*-like game, was given away free with this issue and became an instant hit among all who played it. Elite later released it on its Encore budget software label a year later.



COMPUTER & VIDEO GAMES



The superlatives were bandied about at an alarming rate in a feature on two new games from Paul Woakes. The follow-ups to *Mercenary* and *Encounter*, *Damocles* and *Backlash*, were being drooled and fawned over, with Woakes being hailed as a genius. Thing is, it was probably right…



CHARTS

OCTOBER 1987



BBC

1. Grand Prix Construction Set (Superior Software)
2. Around The World In 40 Screens (Superior Software)
3. Dunjunz (Bug-Byte)
4. Codename Droid (Superior Software)
5. Phantom (Tynesoft)



AMSTRAD

1. Paperboy (Elite)
2. Grand Prix Simulator (Codemasters)
3. Cricket International (Alternative)
4. Milk Race (Mastertronic)
5. BMX Simulator (Codemasters)



ATARI XE/XL

1. Decathlon (Firebird)
2. Milk Race (Mastertronic)
3. Gauntlet (US Gold)
4. The Living Daylights (Domark)
5. Amaurote (Mastertronic)

MUSIC

1. Crockett's Theme (Jan Hammer)
2. Full Metal Jacket (I Wanna Be Your Drill Instructor) (Abigail Mead & Nigel Goulding)
3. Pump Up The Volume (MARRS)
4. You Win Again (Bee Gees)
5. Crazy Crazy Nights (Kiss)

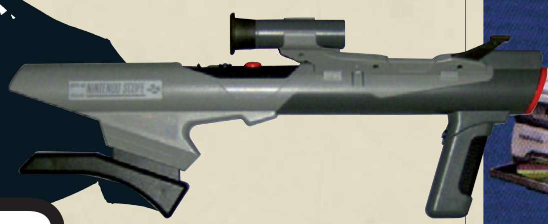


BACK TO THE NINETIES

THE LATEST NEWS FROM MAY 1992



MAY 92 – ACU sinks while CPC Attacks, Nintendo gets its bazookas out but not its CD-ROM, James Pond goes button-bashing and football is everywhere. Richard Burton dons his Yugoslavia shirt and scarf and waits for Euro '92 to start…



» It looked like the must-have SNES add-on but suffered from a lack of quality games.



» It tantalised SNES gamers for many months, but Nintendo eventually pulled the plug on the SNES CD-ROM.



» [Amiga] Football and platform gaming? A strange combination that somehow worked very well indeed.

With the popular 8-bit machines hanging on to their wafer-thin percentage of software and magazine sales, another nail was hammered into Amstrad's coffin with the demise of the first CPC publication, *Amstrad Computer User*. After 90 issues the official Amstrad magazine bowed out. It may have had a slightly stuffy technical bent, but it was a cornerstone of the early Amstrad days. It left CPCers with only one magazine, *Amstrad Action*, to fill the void…

However, the publisher of *ACU* had other thoughts. HHL Publishing revealed in the final issue of *ACU* that its brand new Amstrad magazine, *CPC Attack*, would be on the shelves of your newsagents by June.

Considering the lack of 8-bit output at the time, with most systems in their twilight commercial years combined with the onward march of all things console-based, the decision to release a new magazine seemed exceedingly flawed. Time would tell whether *CPC Attack* would enjoy any longevity…



» The musty-smelling uncle of CPC magazines was to be replaced by *CPC Attack*, the new cool dude dowsed in Blue Stratos.

For fans of the newly released Super Nintendo and of short-range rocket launchers, a newly released product from Nintendo should get gamers foaming at the mouth. The Super Nintendo Scope was a bazooka-like wireless lightgun that would supposedly enhance your gaming and maiming pleasure, by means of infrared and a special box plonked on the top of your old CRT television and plugged into the SNES.

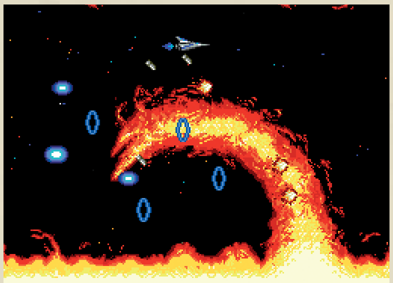
Unfortunately, given the selection of games that came complete with the Scope and the eventual list of games it was compatible with, most of the dozen or so titles were pretty dire offerings. Only *Operation Thunderbolt* really managed any credibility as a Scope game. Certainly, for a £79.99 outlay, you would be hoping for something a bit more substantial.

Staying with Nintendo, it continued touting its proposed CD-ROM add-on for the SNES and there was further news drip-fed to the press about planned games for the new format. These included the latest *Mario* and *Zelda* titles, as well as confirmation that several third-party developers were ready to get behind the system.

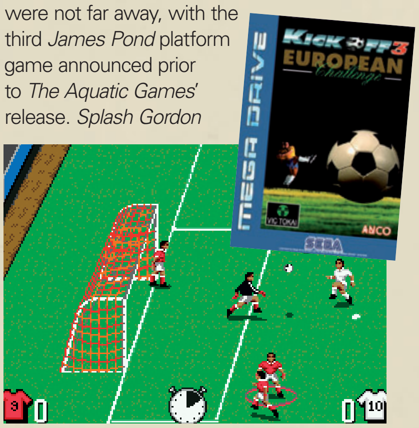
All this conjecture and speculation was later found to be a work of fiction with the eventual cancellation of the CD-ROM unit. The question remained, though: why wouldn't Nintendo want to release it? Sega's Mega-CD sold well enough in the territories where it was released and, more significantly, SNES gamers wanted it.

Coming soon and not at all a cash-in for the forthcoming Summer Olympics was *The Aquatic Games*. Featuring James Pond, the platform game favourite, publisher Millennium thought it time for the fishy one to spread his fins into other game genres. *The Aquatic Games* was a lampoon of the joystick/forearm-breaking waggle-fests such as *Track & Field*, except the featured eight 'sports' were all borderline madness, the strangest of the bunch being Kipper Watching. Although an interesting departure for Millennium's main cash cow, it met with a mixed reception when released on the Amiga and Mega Drive.

Still, better news and familiar territory were not far away, with the third *James Pond* platform game announced prior to *The Aquatic Games'* release. *Splash Gordon*



» [PC-Engine] Another terrific shooter on the PC-Engine, with the unusual feature of having alternate horizontal and vertical levels.



» [Mega Drive] Appalling game considering the series' fine heritage. It's *Kick Off* in name only…

1992

MAY NEWS

22 May saw Johnny Carson end his hosting run on *The Tonight Show* after 30 years and 4,531 shows. 25 May would see Jay Leno take over for the first of his 3,775-show stint.

On 19 May former World's Strongest Man Dave Gauder pulled a 200-ton jumbo jet three inches. A combination of exhaustion, duty free and a delay at Terminal 5 finally ended the incredible feat.

7-16 May marked the first mission for the newest Space Shuttle, Endeavour. Built to replace Challenger, destroyed in 1986, the new Shuttle set several records on its maiden mission. It was the first mission to feature a spacewalk by three astronauts simultaneously. It also held the longest duration for a spacewalk (8 hours and 29 minutes), mainly due to a problematic rescue of an Intelsat satellite.

8 May brought *Basic Instinct* to UK cinemas. It became infamous for Sharon Stone's leg-uncrossing manoeuvre while under interrogation. This caused thousands of rental copies to develop a strange fuzziness during that scene due to excessive pausing and rewinding. Hurrah for DVD!



» We sincerely hope that leather seat was given a once-over with a wet wipe after her interview…



» Space Shuttle Endeavour's maiden voyage set several records.





» [Amiga] James Pond is back, but in this unusual bicep-throbbing waggle-fest rather than his preferred platform genre.



» [Amiga] Extremely average football management game. Do we not like that? Uh… yes… It's rubbish…

would be available around Christmas time, although the title would change into *James Pond 3: Operation Starfish* by then.

With a major international football tournament approaching, there was no surprise when a tidal wave of football-themed games came onto the horizon. Deep joy.

Krisalis Software, keen to maximize profits, announced that it had no less than three games on the way. The hat-trick consisted of *Graham Taylor's Football Challenge* – the management part of the trio – closely followed by *John Barnes European Football* – the arcade element – and the slightly unusual offering of *Soccer Kid*, a platform game where the ball is your weapon. It was innovative and by far the best of the bunch.

All three were available on the Amiga, while ST owners strangely missed out on *Soccer Kid*, having to console themselves with the two endorsed products.

Domark pitched in with *European Football Champ*, a pure arcade footy game based on the geriatric Taito coin-op machine. Sadly, it was more arse than Arsenal.

The newly created Rage Software, formerly Special-FX, the creative team behind Ocean's *Midnight Resistance* and *RoboCop 2*, announced its first release: *Striker*, a top-down *Kick Off*-style game with the merest whiff of a 3D perspective. Available for the ST, Amiga, SNES and Mega Drive, it hardly set the world on fire when it did finally arrive.

Meanwhile Anco was being ultra-secretive about its own game: the highly anticipated *Kick Off 3: European Challenge*. *Kick Off* guru Dino Dini was again the creative brains behind the project… at least for a while…

Shortly after *Kick Off 3* was announced, Dino Dini left Anco to develop a new football game for Virgin Games, the abruptly titled *Goal!* for the Amiga and Atari ST, which saw release in mid-1993.

Kick Off 3 finally emerged in 1994 and didn't look or play like any of its former iterations. The top-down view had become left-to-right and the game was a travesty.

Computer & Video Games doled out just two *C&VG* Hit stickers to plonk on the boxes of *Smash TV* (Acclaim, SNES) and *Asterix* (Sega, Master System). The near misses that scored highly in the reviews were: *Two Crude Dudes* (Data East, Mega Drive), *The New Zealand Story* (Ocean, NES), *Contra Spirit* (Konami, SNES), *Salamander* (Konami, PC-Engine), *TwinBee* (Konami, PC-Engine) and *Steel Empire* (Hot B, Mega Drive).

THIS MONTH IN…



SEGA FORCE

With Sega's Wondermega looking like it could be released in the UK, *Sega Force* was positively drooling at the thought of a combined Mega Drive and Mega-CD console hitting UK shores. Unfortunately it never happened, and one of the best-looking machines ever released remained a Japanese-only affair.





MEAN MACHINES

With the recent releases of the SNES and Mega Drive consoles, it came as no surprise to find a head-to-head feature. With pros and cons for both, the final verdict on which system was best was unedifying: they're both as good as each other.





SINCLAIR USER

Issue 123 of *SU* was the first to incorporate *Crash* magazine after the company had been liquidated. We're not quite sure exactly what it incorporated into the pages of *Sinclair User* as it used the *Crash* logo twice throughout the entire magazine… and that was it. Money well spent, chaps.



CHARTS

MAY 1992



PC

1. Falcon 3 (Spectrum Holobyte/Microprose)
2. Star Trek 25th Anniversary (Electronic Arts)
3. Lemmings (Psygnosis)
4. Oh No! More Lemmings (Psygnosis)
5. Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge (LucasArts)



ATARI ST

1. Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker (Virgin Games)
2. WWF (Ocean)
3. James Pond 2: Codename Robocod (Millennium)
4. Kick Off 2: Return To Europe (Anco)
5. Manchester United Europe (Krisalis)



AMIGA

1. Formula One Grand Prix (MicroProse)
2. Kick Off 2: Return To Europe (Anco)
3. RoboCop (Ocean)
4. Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker (Virgin Games)
5. A320 Airbus (Thalion)

MUSIC

1. Please Don't Go (KWS)
2. On A Ragga Trip (SL2)
3. Knockin' On Heaven's Door (Guns N' Roses)
4. Hang On In There Baby (Curiosity)
5. Everything About You (Ugly Kid Joe)



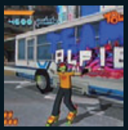
RETRO GAMER.net READER'S REVIVAL

BOBBY IS GOING HOME

THE LONG AND UNWINDING ROAD... HOME



» **PUBLISHER:** CCE
» **RELEASED:** 1983
» **GENRE:** ACTION
» **FEATURED HARDWARE:** ATARI 2600
» **EXPECT TO PAY:** A FEW QUID



HISTORY

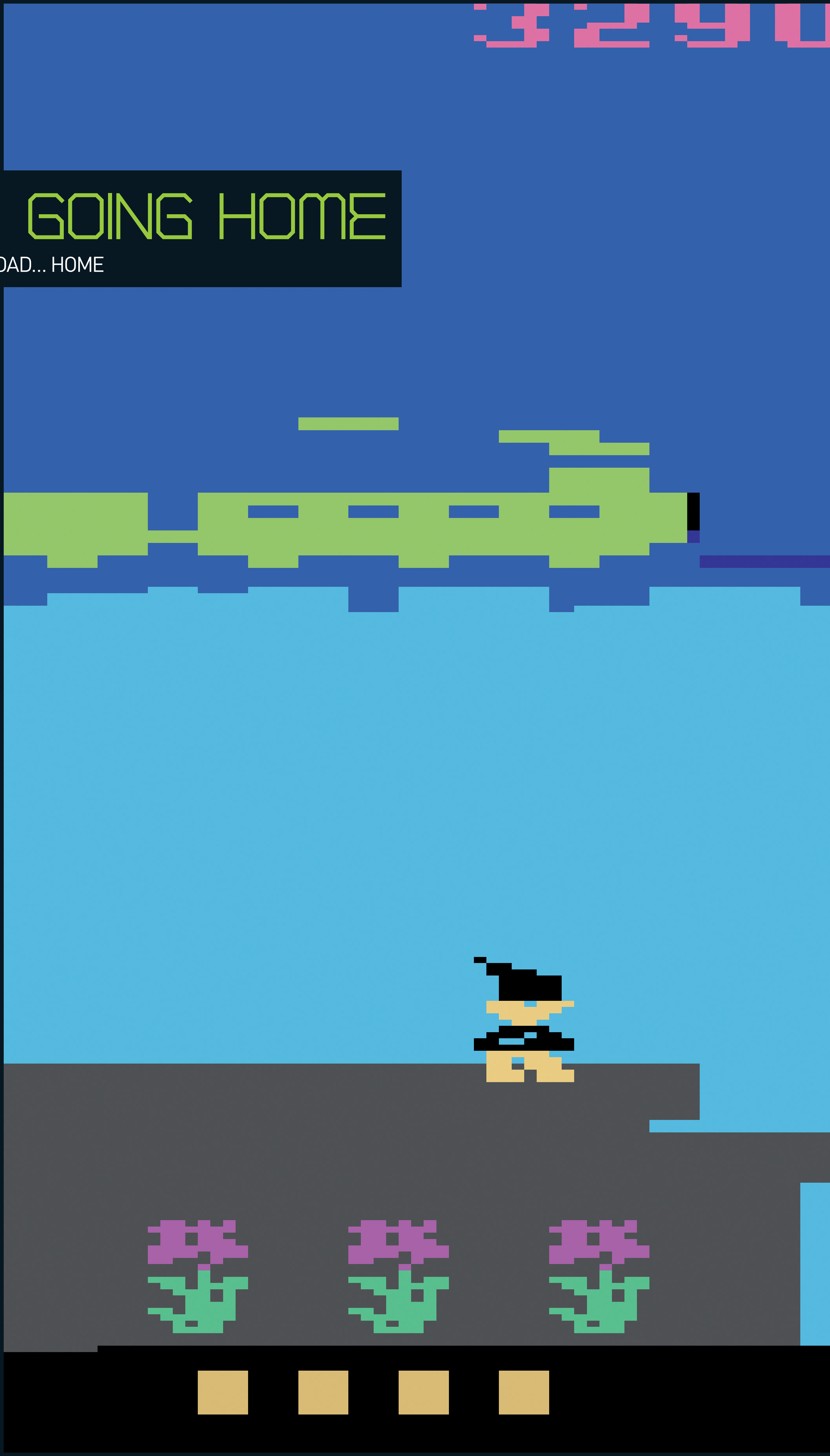
Bobby isn't out to rescue a princess. Bobby isn't on a quest to stop an evil force from destroying the world. Bobby is going home. And what could be more exciting than a game about walking home? Those who've traversed a city street after midnight or carefully inched past some hoodies in an alleyway will know that there is nothing more thrilling or rewarding than completing a walk home without being murdered.

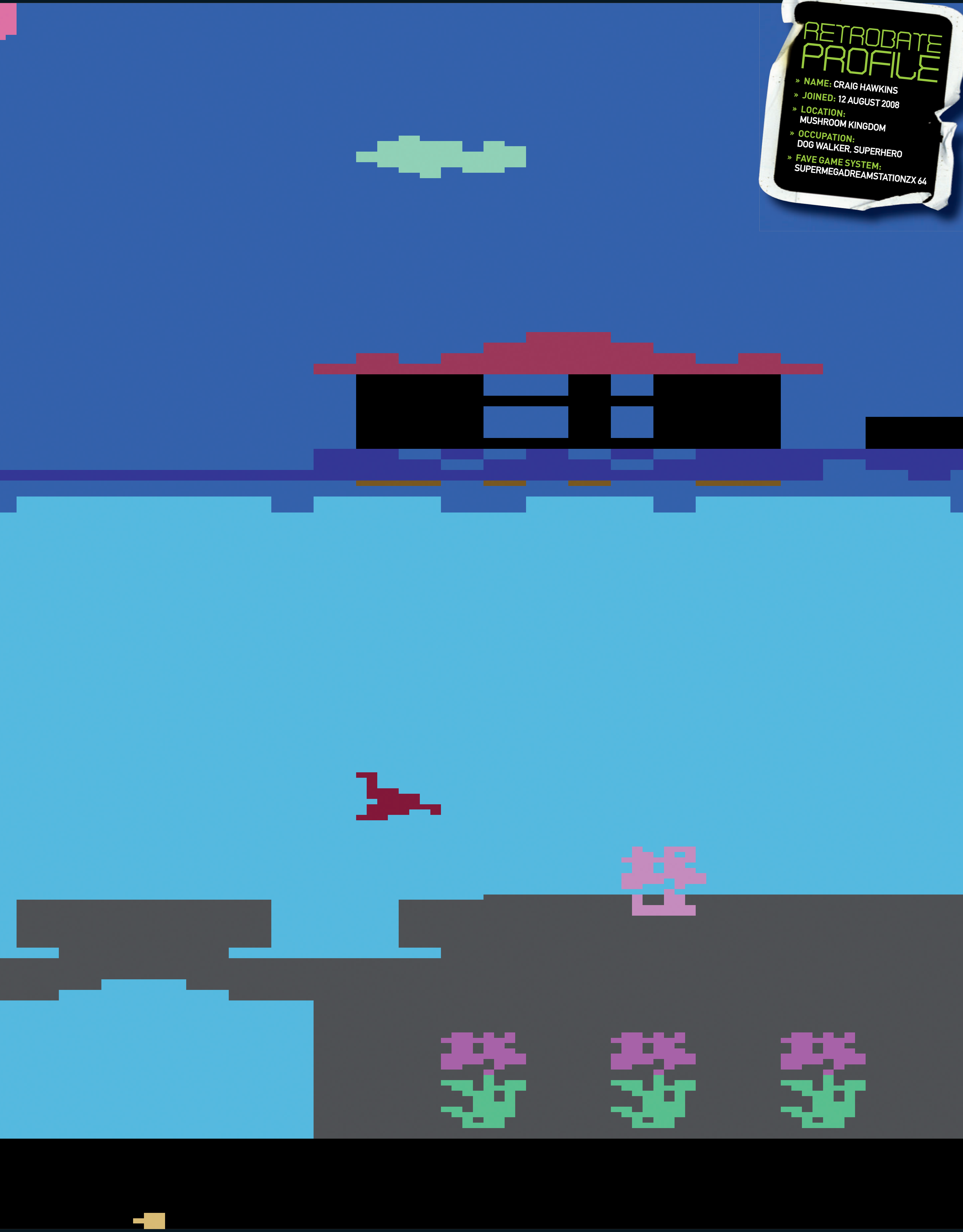
Bobby looks like he's already had quite the night. He's naked from the waist down and the song *What A Friend We Have In Jesus* is going round and round in his head. This is the kind of lyric you might sing to comfort yourself after being traumatised. The back of the box explains that Bobby sees the world as a beautiful place and considers his life perfect until the day he encounters 'strange troubles'. Goodness, we dare not ask what has happened to the poor child. We'd better get him home as soon as possible.

To do so requires you to navigate seven screens of bats, birds, sliding bridges and various inanimate objects. I prefer to replace these items in my mind with *Big Issue* sellers, prostitutes, teenage gangs and dog mess. But the game doesn't end upon Bobby's safe return to his parents. No sir, we get to guide him home every night. Yay. He insists on taking the same perilous route each time, only in a different order to rearrange the screen sequences and obstacle placements. You best prepare to bump into Mr Repetitive before long.

The game has a range of identities, including the common German name of *Bobby Geht Heim*, the simple *Bobby*, the somewhat hostile *Bob Go Home* and the thoroughly confusing *Jumpy Jack*, *Felix Return* and *Niky Wanders*. In some versions Bobby even has his trousers back on, and if you're really lucky, you might find the Brazilian two-in-one cartridge which couples the game with *Pooyan*.

Want to appear in the magazine? Be sure to upload your classic profiles at www.retrogamer.net





RETROBATE PROFILE

» **NAME:** CRAIG HAWKINS
» **JOINED:** 12 AUGUST 2008
» **LOCATION:** MUSHROOM KINGDOM
» **OCCUPATION:** DOG WALKER, SUPERHERO
» **FAVE GAME SYSTEM:** SUPERMEGADREAMSTATIONZX 64

Tales From Monkey Island



Just one year ago you would have been forgiven for writing off the point-and-click adventure as well and truly dead. But that all changed this summer when it made a spectacular comeback thanks to the long-overdue resurrection of the genre's most beloved game. To celebrate, Ashley Day looks back at the entire Monkey Island series and talks to the talented folk that brought the swashbuckling adventure to life nearly two decades ago

How many Retro Gamer readers also buy and read contemporary games magazines? We're not sure. But those of you who do might be aware of a problem that currently exists in the modern games business: a problem of self-confidence. Constantly compared to the movie and music industry in terms of profitability, but rarely in terms of creativity, the games industry is eager to prove itself as a valid artistic medium. Critics, theorists and practitioners endlessly debate the issue to the point of tedium. Games, they say, lack interesting stories and compelling characters; they struggle with humour and emotional context and focus too easily on violence and action in the absence of anything more fulfilling.

In an age that's obsessed with online deathmatches and open-world 'adult' simulations, these arguments bear a lot of weight. But as anyone who's been playing games for more than the last ten years will tell you, the medium is perfectly capable of telling great stories, realising memorable characters and making us laugh our socks off. Just look at the point-and-click adventure. Now sadly struggling against extinction, it once shone so brightly. Specifically from 1987 to 2000, when the pioneering Lucasfilm Games (now LucasArts) specialised in the most entertaining adventures money could buy. From *Maniac Mansion* to *Grim Fandango*, these titles offered gamers the chance to take part in a real story without having to worry about difficulty levels, extra lives or credits. The puzzles were a challenge, sure, but they were a breath of fresh air for those tired of button-bashing violence, and their relaxed nature allowed the player to take in the story, world and characters at their own pace.

> "Ask fans what their favourite adventure is, and most will say Monkey Island"

Ask anyone who lived through this era what their favourite adventure game is and most will say *The Secret Of Monkey Island*. First released in 1990 on various home computer formats, it placed us deep in the heart of the Caribbean and put us in control of Guybrush Threepwood, a naive and inexperienced young man who appeared to be as new to the game's world as us. Stepping onto the screen for the first time, he simply but memorably states: "My name is Guybrush Threepwood and I want to be a pirate." And, with that, the wheels were set for one of the most loved stories in videogame history. Initially arriving at the dark and seedy Mêlée Island to learn how to become a pirate, Guybrush inadvertently becomes involved in something much bigger, gaining an undead arch-nemesis and an intimidatingly confident love interest along the way. And let's not forget the puzzles, most of which were solved with some ridiculous combination of items.

The Secret Of Monkey Island was, for the most part, the brainchild of Ron Gilbert, a veteran Lucasfilm Games programmer and co-creator of SCUMM, the engine that had made all Lucas adventures possible since the C64's *Maniac Mansion*. SCUMM was a revolution in adventure design for the way it streamlined the typical adventure interface from a command line system to a point-and-click setup. This eliminated the need to second-guess the game's vocabulary, leaving the player free to get on with the puzzles and enjoy the story.



» [Amiga] Guybrush arrives at Monkey Island for the first time as his crew mutiny by sunbathing.

This seamless marriage of gameplay and story was what made LucasArts adventures so much fun to play, so it shouldn't come as much surprise to learn that *Monkey Island*'s roots can be found in both technology and fiction. Ron Gilbert had always had a passion for pirates, you see, and when it came time to create the world of *Monkey Island* he took inspiration from two very specific sources. The first was Disney's Pirates Of The Caribbean theme park ride, which helped define the ambience of the game world, while the second was Tim Powers' 1988 novel *On Stranger Tides*, which had a greater bearing on the plot and characters.

The Secret Of Monkey Island was no rip-off, however, and required a lot of work on the story and dialogue alone, from Gilbert and his two assistants, Tim Schafer and Dave Grossman. "My first memory is writing the first short story," says Gilbert. "I had gone to a friend's house to spend the weekend writing and I knew I wanted to do a game about pirates, but that was about it. I wrote a slew of opening paragraphs looking for something that caught. I didn't have Guybrush at this point, but I knew there was going to be a LeChuck, though not in name yet. Elaine Marley started out as a villain, but slowly grew to become a one-sided love interest of Guybrush's. She is a great example of how characters can grow during the course of making a game."

"Tim and Dave were both great writers that I had a lot of trust in, but they had very different styles. I'd assign them dialogues to write based on who would be able to find the voice of that character best," he adds.







"My sense of time is a little shaky after designing *Day Of The Tentacle*, so I have some difficulty placing events before or after one another," says Dave Grossman. "I remember watching pirate movies for research – Errol Flynn mostly – and noticing that they used identical sea battle footage. I remember writing the dialogue for the Fettucini Brothers, which I think was probably the first conversation I worked on, and Noah Falstein looking over my shoulder and thinking it was funny, and that making me want to write more. I remember us trying to come up with a better name than Guybrush, and not being able to. 'Reginald' was a possibility, but if we'd used it then that 'Mancomb Seepgood' joke wouldn't have made much sense.

"I made the characters' dialogue appear over their heads instead of in a central location. Ron didn't want to do it because he insisted that it would be complicated, but it was one of the few times he was wrong. It was outrageously simple. Okay, okay, maybe that wasn't my most important contribution – I did bring a good ear for dialogue, a feel for how to write non-linearly, and a sense of humour. Tim had many of the same qualities, with an extra sharp wit to boot – he wrote many of the quotable zingy one-liners you tend to associate with the series, whereas I tended to work more in dry layers, word humour, and outlandish character."

"Ron, of course, was the soul and brain of *Monkey Island*," Grossman adds diplomatically. "He's a genius designer who really understands how to make a game be a story, and vice versa; how to structure it, and how to make it fun. I learned a ton from him about all of that stuff while we were making those games. And he was and is a magnificent team leader, who enables you to do your best work, and also makes you want to do it."

"My main focus in making *Monkey Island* was the design of the game," Gilbert elaborates, "and I spent a lot of time working on puzzles and story flow. I had written the 'Why Adventure Games Suck' article and *Monkey Island* was a test case for that design philosophy." Gilbert's essay is far too long to reprint here, but the full version is currently available on the author's blog at **grumpygamer.com**. Trust us, it is well worth your time to read the fascinating and historically important document. In fact, do it now if you can. This article will still be here when you get back.





» Ron Gilbert, genius *Monkey Island* creator.

It's easy to see, in hindsight, just how brilliant *Monkey Island* was for its time. The game followed all of Gilbert's rules, some better than others, and in turn provided an adventure that was much less frustrating and therefore more rewarding than practically any that had come before. Ensuring that the player should not die, and therefore preventing the tiresome replaying of old sections, was perhaps Gilbert's greatest change; one that made it more accessible to exactly the sort of people that adventure games had the potential to reach and one that has, with few exceptions, continued to be a defining characteristic of the genre.

Of course, if you're going to credit *Monkey Island* with accessibility then you can't do so without mentioning the humour. *Monkey Island*'s humour was

A-Z Of Monkey Island

A is for… Anemone. A gender-ambiguous merperson that flirts with Guybrush during his visit to Spinner Cay in the second episode of *Tales Of Monkey Island*.

B is for… Bill Tiller. The artist who painted all of the stunning backgrounds in *The Curse Of Monkey Island*. Bill now runs his own adventure studio, Autumn Moon Entertainment.

C is for… Carla. The swordmaster from *Secret Of Monkey Island*, who Guybrush defeats after studying the art of insult swordfighting.

D is for … Dinky Island. The final location in *Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge* and home of several revelations, including the 'truth' that Guybrush and LeChuck are brothers.

E is for… Elaine Marley. Governor of Mêlée Island and love interest for Guybrush, Elaine is much smarter than our hero and tends to run circles around him. To comical effect, of course.

F is for… Flotsam Island. The first destination in *Tales Of Monkey Island*. Flotsam is a cursed island, surrounded by wind that stops all its inhabitants from sailing away.

G is for… Guybrush. Of course! So named because 'guy' was a placeholder name on the sprite's Deluxe Paint .brush file. 'guy.brush'. Get it?

H is for… Herman Toothrot. Guybrush encounters this crazy old hermit many times throughout the series until the revelation, in *Escape From Monkey Island*, that he is actually Elaine's long-lost father.

I is for… International House of Mojo. The mysterious abode of recurring character Voodoo Lady, the International House of Mojo has an uncanny ability to appear wherever Guybrush roams.

J is for… Jojo. Guybrush lures this monkey to the giant monkey head with bananas and uses him to pull the lever that opens the head. Jojo later dies from starvation, because Guybrush didn't tell him to let go of the lever.

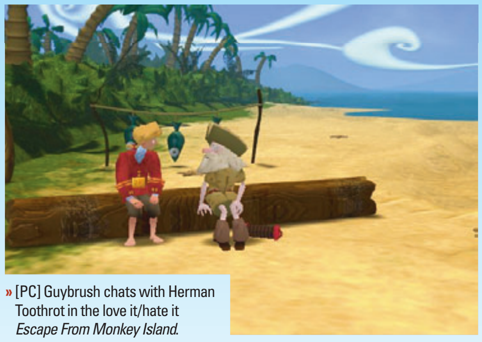
K is for… Knuttin Atoll. A small island off the coast of Jambalaya, used as a prison for exiled pirates. Home to the Pirate Transmogrification Academy.

L is for… Largo LaGrande. A greedy thug and LeChuck henchman, who terrorises and mugs Guybrush in the opening act of *Monkey Island 2*, relieving him of his riches. Rumoured to return in a future episode of *Tales*.

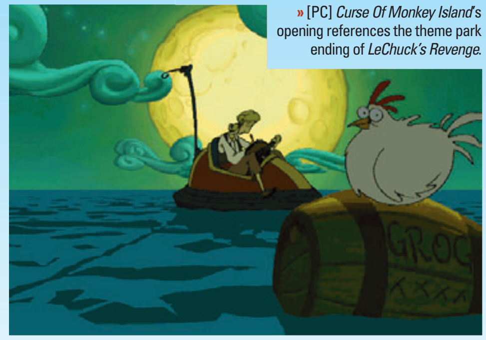
M is for… Mancomb Seepgood. A fellow pirate found in the Scumm Bar in the first game and an obvious parody of Guybrush Threepwood.



» [PC] *Curse Of Monkey Island* introduced Murray, one of the greatest characters in the series.



» [PC] Guybrush chats with Herman Toothrot in the love it/hate it *Escape From Monkey Island*.



» [PC] *Curse Of Monkey Island*'s opening references the theme park ending of *LeChuck's Revenge*.

essential to the game in more than just a way to make the story interesting. It gave a true purpose to dialogue trees, making each line fun even if it doesn't glean any useful information, and it could spark witty remarks from Guybrush himself, should you incorrectly try to solve a puzzle. Moreover, the items you used, and the way in which you used them, were often comical in and of themselves, incorporating humour into the interactivity, which is the heart of any game.

This point is perhaps best illustrated by our interviewees. When asked what their favourite puzzle and joke from the first game was, we expected them to give two answers each, but instead they both gave a single example that was a puzzle and a joke at the same time: "Rubber Chicken with a Pulley in the Middle," says Gilbert in reference to an item that appears to be useless for much of the game before allowing Guybrush to cross islands by dangling from the rubber chicken, which is hooked over a wire line. "It was a stupid last-ditch solution to a problem that ended up being very funny and one of the most remembered things from *Monkey Island*."

"I have a certain fondness for the elaborate scene that takes place behind the wall in the governor's mansion," answers Grossman. "We had been trying to design puzzles for that section of the game, and we were discussing something involving a guard and a line of ants from the kitchen, but it just wasn't quite working, and at some point I suggested we chuck it all and make up a scene behind the wall that you couldn't see. I meant it as a joke, but Ron immediately saw that it would be really funny and insisted that I do it, over my protestations that there should be real puzzles there. Well, he was right: it did turn out to be funny."

If we had to pick one of our own, we'd go for Guybrush's clever underwater escape. Thrown into the sea by Fester Shinetop, Guybrush finds himself tied to a stone idol and unable to move more than a few feet. Several items lie around that look as though they could help cut him free, but they ultimately prove useless, and the only solution, brilliantly, is to just pick up the stone idol and walk back to the shore. It's humour like this that openly poked fun at adventure game conventions and made *Monkey Island* feel that little bit smarter than its contemporaries.

Cleverer, funnier and easier to like than any other adventure of its time, it's little surprise that *The Secret Of Monkey Island* became such a smash for LucasArts. The original DOS version was quickly ported to the Amiga, Atari ST and Apple Mac in order to satisfy demand, while later conversions for the Mega-CD and FM Towns ensured that even the Japanese got a taste of the unique comedy adventure. And though sales weren't quite as high as Lucas's previous adventure, *Loom*, the publisher sensed franchise potential in *Monkey Island* and immediately allowed Gilbert, Schafer and Grossman to begin work on the first ever Lucas adventure sequel.

Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge was released just a year after the first game but came complete with a number of technical improvements. Graphically it looked leaps and bounds ahead of the first game due to the fact that it swapped pixel art backgrounds for hand-painted backdrops that better captured the mood and menace of Gilbert's voodoo-obsessed Caribbean. Sound, too, had been overhauled, thanks to a new program called iMUSE, which allowed the soundtrack to seamlessly segue between different signature tunes and dramatic scores in accordance with the player's movements and decisions.



This was also the *Monkey Island* game that most paid homage to its Pirates Of The Caribbean influence, with a prison escape sequence, involving a dog and a key, that is practically identical to an animatronic scene from the 42-year-old ride. More infamously, the game's unforgettable finale reveals that the world of Guybrush Threepwood actually was just a theme park ride. While searching for the legendary treasure 'Big Whoop' on Dinky Island, Guybrush discovers an elevator to the first game's Mêlée Island,

N is for… Nine years. The amount of time between the release of *Escape From Monkey Island* and *Tales Of Monkey Island*. The longest gap in the series to date.

O is for… Otis. A pirate who appears in the first and fourth games, finding himself imprisoned for stealing flowers in each.

P is for… Point-and-click. The control method used in the first three games. Variations of direct control were used for the remaining two.

Q is for… Quiet Patron. This skeleton appears in *The Curse Of Monkey Island* wearing a badge that says 'Ask Me About *Grim Fandango*', a clear reference to the 'Ask Me About *Loom*' badge in the first game.

R is for… Rubber Chicken with a Pulley in the Middle. One of the most famous items in the first game. Seemingly, but not entirely, useless for almost the entire adventure.

S is for… SCUMM. The engine that powers the first three games. Stands for Script Creation Utility for *Maniac Mansion*.

T is for… Telltale Games. The only studio outside of LucasArts to have developed a *Monkey Island* game. Telltale is formed from many ex-LucasArts staff.

U is for… U Tube. A U-shaped glass tube found on Flotsam Island. Try to use it on most things and Guybrush quips: "I'm not putting that on U Tube".

V is for… Voodoo Lady. One of only four characters to have appeared in every game so far. The Voodoo Lady often gives hints to Guybrush and occasionally plays a direct role in the puzzles.

W is for… Wally B Feed. A young cartographer who helps Guybrush in *Monkey Island 2* and *3*. The only *Monkey Island 2* character to reappear.

X is for… X-Wing. One of many *Star Wars* references throughout the series. This one appears half-submerged in the swamp in *Escape From Monkey Island*.

Y is for… Yongler and Muntz. A famous comedy duo that Guybrush is a fan of. He mistakes Carla and Otis for them in the fourth game.

Z is for… Zombie. The undead form taken by LeChuck in *Monkey Island 2*. He is a ghost in the first game, a demon in the third, a golem in the fourth and a human in *Tales*.

The Painting Of Monkey Island



Sam & Max creator Steve Purcell worked on the first two Monkey Island games and painted their cover art. More recently, he returned to paint the packaging for the forthcoming disk release of Tales Of Monkey Island



» Steve Purcell, *Monkey Island* illustrator, *Sam & Max* creator, and Pixar storyteller, hard at work.

Retro Gamer: Why do you think the *Monkey Island* series remains so popular?

Steve Purcell: I think the combination of the rich environment mixed with the anachronistic comedy has a lasting appeal. Guybrush, the clueless everyman, stands out as a unique hero when you compare him to so many of the tough guy lead characters that dominate games.

RG: Where did the inspiration for the original *Monkey Island* artwork originate?

SP: The first *Monkey Island* cover was a great chance for me to get to interpret the story since the artwork in the first game was so minimalist and the characters so tiny. I was pretty free to imagine how they might really look. I remember when I was starting the second cover, *LeChuck's Revenge*, Ron Gilbert mentioned that he was hoping it could look like a classic illustrated book. I spent a month working in oil paints on a two-by-three-foot canvas and I recently found some bizarre photos of myself painting it with a ventriloquist dummy on my lap with me helping him hold the brush.

RG: What was it like returning for *Tales Of Monkey Island*?

SP: It was great to be asked to do a new cover. My style has evolved over the years and I tend to work in a choppy scumbly technique when I paint now. You never know what the fans will think when you revisit something they loved two decades ago so it's nice to hear people are liking it. I thought Telltale's Guybrush character design was great so I made an effort to stay fairly close to it in the piece. The painting is also an homage to the previous covers.

RG: You're now working at Pixar. Have you pitched John Lasseter a *Monkey Island* or *Sam & Max* movie yet?

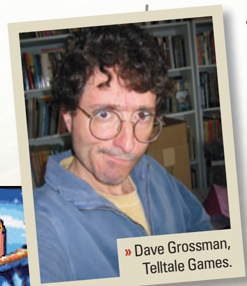
SP: LucasArts owns *Monkey Island* so it's up to them to give Mr Lasseter a call. As far as *Sam & Max*, I love Disney characters but I don't know if I'd classify *Sam & Max* that way. I think *Sam & Max*'s moral foundation is built on swampland so I don't know that they quite fit into the pantheon of Disney characters. I'm enjoying the stories that Telltale is building around them. It seems like Telltale are well in the groove when it comes to *Sam & Max*.

which should be miles away and separated by ocean. It soon becomes apparent that the whole world is an artifice, created for a theme park called Big Whoop, and as the game ends both Guybrush and LeChuck emerge from the park as infant brothers and leave along with their parents. The shock ending is made somewhat ambiguous, however, by a demonic glint in the eyes of the human child LeChuck (Chuckie) as he leaves, and the final scene of the game, which shows Elaine, still in the world of *Monkey Island*, wondering where Guybrush has gone to.

Though it's one of the most memorable videogame endings of all time, *Monkey Island 2*'s climax is a poisoned chalice for a number of reasons. The first is that it overshadows the game itself, which is undoubtedly the finest in the series and, some would argue, the closest LucasArts has come to a genuine masterpiece. The second reason is that the twist ending generated so much shock and confusion that fans felt they needed a full explanation as much as they needed air and water. Unfortunately for them, they never got that explanation as Ron Gilbert left LucasArts after the completion of *LeChuck's Revenge* and took the real secret of *Monkey Island* with him.

As Gilbert left, Grossman and Schafer also moved away from the world of Guybrush, Elaine and LeChuck. Both moved on to design the time travel-based *Maniac Mansion* sequel, *Day Of The Tentacle*, before the former left to join Gilbert at Humongous Entertainment, while the latter went on to create legendary LucasArts adventures *Full Throttle* and *Grim Fandango*.

With the original team absent, the future of *Monkey Island* looked bleak, and it took another six years before the third instalment would arrive. Named *The Curse Of Monkey Island*, this third game was designed by Larry Ahern and Jonathan Ackley, a respective artist and programmer duo that had previously worked on *Sam & Max Hit The Road* and *Day Of The Tentacle*.



» Dave Grossman, Telltale Games.

Ahern and Ackley had the impossible and thankless task of continuing Guybrush's adventure despite Gilbert's mythology-destroying ending to *Monkey Island 2*. The pair resolved to reveal that the Big Whoop theme park was actually built by LeChuck on Monkey Island and was more correctly called The Carnival Of The Damned, designed to transform visitors into LeChuck's undead army. *Curse Of Monkey Island*'s plot explained that Guybrush was trapped in the carnival between games *2* and *3* and that the revelation of he and LeChuck being infant brothers was actually just an illusion.

The explanation definitely holds water and created a typically dark but comedic premise for *Curse*, but it





is also not the true secret that Ron Gilbert would have revealed, had he stayed at LucasArts to write the game himself. As such, many fans still consider the ending to *LeChuck's Revenge* unresolved and see all subsequent sequels as semi-canon. To do so, however, really is unfair on the rest of the series, particularly *Curse*, which is a truly brilliant adventure.

Packed with ingenious puzzles and sharp humour, *The Curse Of Monkey Island* effortlessly earns its place alongside the first two games and, like its predecessors, made a number of technical improvements that once again raised the bar for the series and its genre. The most obvious of these were the visuals, which had been completely overhauled with high-resolution animated backdrops, painted by Bill Tiller, and larger, more cartoony characters that made the whole game look like an expensive interactive cartoon. It looked so good, in fact, that it was difficult to believe that it was still running on that very same SCUMM engine that was built for *Maniac Mansion* a full decade previously.

If your game is going to look like a cartoon then it might as well sound like one too. Thankfully, *Curse* was the first *Monkey Island* to come on a CD-ROM as standard, which meant that the audio could be far greater than ever before. Michael Land, the only person to have worked on every single *Monkey Island* game, returned to write the score and delivered what many fans regard as the very best soundtrack the series has ever enjoyed. In addition, Guybrush and company found themselves with actual voices for the first time. This was a risky move, since players had two full games with which to imagine a voice in their heads, so a real cast could have easily disrupted those preconceptions. But *Curse Of Monkey Island*'s voicework was, without exception, superb. Every character felt just right, especially Guybrush who was voiced by professional voice artist and long-time *Monkey Island* fan Dominic Armato, who perfectly captured Guybrush's likeable naivety as though the part had been written for him from the start. Armato has since become an indispensable component of *Monkey Island*'s brilliance, returning to the audio booth to act in all of the games that followed *Curse* and even to voice the special editions of the earlier games.

Though its beginnings were shrouded in doubt and uncertainty, *Curse* quickly proved itself worthy of the *Monkey Island* name and, 12 years on, few fans regard it with anything other than fondness. Even the series' original creators, who were never consulted on *Curse*'s development, have to admit that it deserves some respect. "*Curse Of Monkey Island* was a great opportunity for me to finally experience the franchise from the point of view of the audience," says Grossman. "And I thought they did a great job with it. It felt like they got the humour right. I wish Elaine had had more of a part, and I thought it was too bad that the ending got scoped down to hardly anything because of budgetary pressures, but I enjoyed it very much."

Gilbert similarly liked *Curse*, "except for Guybrush and Elaine getting together," he adds, suggesting that Guybrush's love should have gone mostly unrequited, as in the first two games.

> **"Monkey Island 2 is the closest LucasArts has come to a genuine masterpiece"**

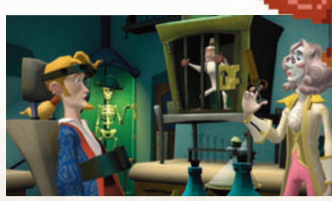
If *Curse* was an unexpected but welcome success then its follow-up, *Escape From Monkey Island*, was the opposite – an inevitable sequel that meant well but got so much wrong. Released in 2000, *Escape* was developed under a certain amount of desperation at LucasArts. Sales of adventure games were falling as genres like the FPS and RPG became the dominant forms of computer entertainment. LucasArts abandoned the ancient SCUMM engine and replaced it with GrimE, a more sophisticated engine that allowed polygon characters to walk around in 3D space, albeit against pre-rendered backgrounds. It was hoped that this move to 3D would help the adventure survive in an increasingly graphics-obsessed business. *Escape From Monkey Island* was the second game to use GrimE, after 1998's *Grim Fandango*, and was the first to be released on the PlayStation 2 in the hope of chasing an audience that was supposedly migrating to consoles.

Both of these decisions were perfectly sound in theory, but did little to aid the survival of the





» [Amiga] A particularly gruesome scene from *Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge*.



» Dominic Armato and Mike Stemmle, during a *Tales Of Monkey Island* recording session.



Interface Evolution

How Monkey Island's point-and-click controls have improved with time

THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND

The first game was only the fifth adventure from Lucasfilm and used a similar system to *Maniac Mansion* – a selection of verbs that could be clicked on followed by an item in the inventory or viewing window.



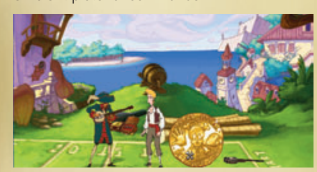
MONKEY ISLAND 2: LeCHUCK'S REVENGE

The second game simplified matters somewhat, reducing the number of verbs to nine and standardising the use of icons for items, rather than the text that was used in some versions of the first game.



THE CURSE OF MONKEY ISLAND

Six years on and the interface changed completely. The menu was gone, allowing the viewing window to fill the screen. In its place was a pop-up menu with just three efficient pictorial commands.



ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND

The first 3D game in the series, *Escape* abandoned point-and-click in favour of direct control. Users moved Guybrush by mouse and when he came into contact with an interactive object options would appear.



TALES OF MONKEY ISLAND

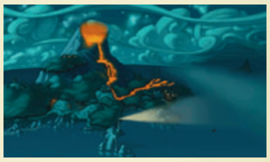
Tales features two control types: direct control with keys or gliding with the mouse. Interactions are made with a context-sensitive solution, as in all Telltale adventures, and the inventory is streamlined.



Island Hopping

A guide to the many islands of LucasArts' Caribbean fantasy

Blood Island
Appears: ***Curse Of Monkey Island***
Guybrush sails here in search of a diamond ring that can uncurse Elaine, transforming her back from a gold statue to human form. He bumps into Monkey Island's cannibals here and finds that they've taken up a new diet of fruit and veg.



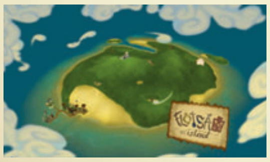
Booty Island
Appears: ***Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge***
A festive party island populated by costume shops and boutiques. Elaine moves here in between games to get away from Guybrush. Mêlée Island's ship dealer, Stan, has also moved here to open a pre-owned coffin shop.



Dinky Island
Appears: ***Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge***
Guybrush travels here to locate Big Whoop and bumps into Monkey Island castaway Herman Toothrot in the process. It is in the bowels of Dinky Island that Guybrush learns he and LeChuck are really brothers.



Flotsam Island
Appears: ***Tales Of Monkey Island***
Guybrush becomes stranded here when he realises that all of Flotsam's coastal winds blow inwards, making it impossible to sail away. After finally escaping, he is captured by Morgan LeFlay and taken back to Flotsam's court to be tried for execution.



Jambalaya Island
Appears: ***Escape From Monkey Island***
Overrun by consumerism, Jambalaya features a coffee shop called StarBuccaneers and a themed restaurant called Planet Threepwood. Stan's Timeshare Emporium can also be found here.



Jerkbait Islands
Appears: ***Tales Of Monkey Island***
Actually a collection of three smaller isles: Spinner Cay, Roe Island and Spoon Isle. Guybrush arrives here in the first chapter of *Tales* in search of voodoo antidote La Esponja Grande and meets merpeople for the first time in *Monkey Island* history.



Lucre Island
Appears: ***Escape From Monkey Island***
A large, wealthy island that Guybrush sails to in order to find lawyers who can save Elaine's mansion for hostile takeover by LeChuck. Guybrush is framed for bank robbery here and must prove his innocence before leaving.



Melee Island
Appears: ***The Secret Of Monkey Island, Escape From Monkey Island***
The first island you visit in the whole series, home of Elaine Marley, Stan, the Voodoo Lady and the Scumm Bar. Guybrush returns here in the fourth game to find it transformed by tourism.



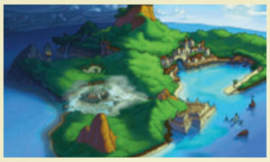
Monkey Island
Appears: ***The Secret Of Monkey Island, The Curse Of Monkey Island, Escape From Monkey Island***
No matter what adventures Guybrush finds himself in, his fate always seems tied to this island. It holds many secrets including LeChuck's HQ, a demonic theme park, and a giant robot monkey.



Phatt Island
Appears: ***Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge***
Guybrush arrives here in search of Big Whoop and is arrested as soon as he gets there. Our hero eventually escapes, however, in a scene that pays direct homage to the Pirates Of The Caribbean theme park ride.



Plunder Island
Appears: ***The Curse Of Monkey Island***
This retirement island for elderly pirates is where much of *Curse*'s story takes place. Its capital is port town Puerto Pollo, named after Plunder Island's infamous feral chicken, which Guybrush later encounters.



Scabb Island
Appears: ***Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge***
Like the first game's initial island, Scabb is only seen at night, contributing to the dark atmosphere. Guybrush finds himself stranded on this island when local thug Largo LaGrande mugs him for all his money.





genre, or *Monkey Island* itself. PlayStation 2 owners, brought up on the likes of *Tomb Raider* and *Grand Theft Auto*, were largely uninterested in thoughtful puzzle games or story-heavy titles like *Monkey Island*, and the primitive 3D graphics, while adequate for *Grim Fandango*'s skeletal characters, felt like a backwards step compared to the broadcast-quality imagery of the cartoony *Curse*.

As well as failing to attract a wider audience, *Escape From Monkey Island* also managed to alienate a large number of existing fans. Though the plot returned Guybrush to the islands of Mêlée and Monkey, in homage to the first game, its story incorporated themes of consumerism that many thought were inappropriate to the series. New designers Mike Stemmle and Sean Clark – previously responsible for *Sam & Max Hit The Road* – came up with the neat idea of parodying the dark side of franchising by introducing a new island named Lucre that featured a coffee shop similar to Starbucks and a restaurant themed around the legend of Guybrush, while Mêlée Island's pirate watering hole, the Scumm Bar, was re-envisioned as a pretentious sushi bar.

Stemmle and Clark's premise was an ironic one given that LucasArts had, over the previous ten years, increasingly become over-reliant on its lucrative *Star Wars* videogames at the expense of original projects. Even smarter, the irony of criticising consumerism while working on the fourth part of a huge game series is not lost on the writers, as noted in the continued use of a trademark symbol whenever any character speaks the words "Monkey Island". But this satirical humour flew over the heads of most *Monkey Island* fans that simply felt that coffee shops and themed restaurants were too contemporary to feature in pirate fiction, seemingly forgetting things like the rollercoaster in *Curse Of Monkey Island* or the grog vending machine in the very first game.

Also criticised was the way *Escape* rewrote some of the fiction of the first game, including the giant monkey head on Monkey Island, which now became the head of a giant monkey robot, and memorable castaway Herman Toothrot, who was revealed to be Elaine's long-lost father. *Escape* also featured some of the most difficult puzzles in the series. Monkey Kombat, in particular, though designed to pay homage to the first game's insult swordfighting, proved to be too difficult for many players because of the way it forced them to learn and memorise the rock-paper-scissors style priorities of certain martial arts stances and then use them against opponents with randomised moves.

Objectively speaking, *Escape From Monkey Island* was a perfectly good adventure game but didn't quite live up to the lofty standards set by the first three games. It's a fact that isn't lost on our interviewees.

"I wasn't too fond of *Escape From Monkey Island*, mainly because it suffered from awkward controls,

Monkey Island: The Movie



Ever wondered why the *Pirates Of The Caribbean* movies are so similar to *Monkey Island*? Some argue that it's just because they're both based on the same ride. But look at that photo of Keith Richards as Captain Teague: he looks exactly like LeChuck. That can't be a coincidence!

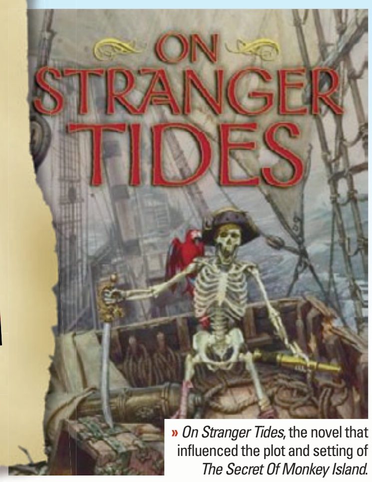
Well, it's likely not a coincidence at all. Back in 2000, Lucasfilm and ILM were working on an animated *Monkey Island* movie that was sadly cancelled during development. All that remains is a few concept paintings by Steve Purcell that are now available on his blog.

What's the connection to *Pirates Of The Caribbean*? In 2007 a fan site called *The World Of Monkey Island* was contacted by an anonymous source, who claimed that the script for the *Monkey Island* movie was written by one Ted Elliott, who later went on to write the first *Pirates Of The Caribbean* movie and establish all of the franchise's characters, many of whom have strong similarities to the *Monkey Island* cast.



The similarities don't end there, either. The fourth *Pirates* film, due for release in 2011, is based on Tim Powers' novel *On Stranger Tides*, the very same book that inspired *The Secret Of Monkey Island*.





» *On Stranger Tides*, the novel that influenced the plot and setting of *The Secret Of Monkey Island*.



» [Amiga] *Monkey Island 2*'s hand-drawn backgrounds still look the business 18 years on.



» [Xbox 360] *Monkey Island Special Edition* added new graphics and voice acting to the original game.



being a 3D/2D hybrid," Gilbert explains. Grossman chimes in: "*Escape* I never finished, but, to be fair, I played it only recently, and my patience and attention span had shrivelled up by then. It's been years since I finished any game that took more than a few hours. I can only focus on… hey, is that an ice cream truck?"

And with that, the *Monkey Island* series seemingly died. *Escape* failed to sell in significant quantities and became LucasArts' last ever adventure game as the developer cancelled all remaining projects and laid off many of its staff. For the best part of a decade, the series lay dormant, until E3 2009 when LucasArts and Telltale Games, where most of the old Lucas crew now work, announced not one but two new Guybrush-themed projects. The first was *The Secret Of Monkey Island Special Edition*, developed internally by LucasArts and now available on the Xbox 360, PC and iPhone, which added new graphics to the 1990 classic and furnished it with a full voice recording for the first time. And, even more excitingly, it was revealed that Telltale would bring us a brand new adventure in the five-part episodic series, *Tales Of Monkey Island*, the first four parts of which are already available on the PC and Wii and are proving that adventure games and Guybrush still have what it takes to entertain the world.

It's no surprise that *Tales Of Monkey Island* has turned out so well, of course. As well as bringing Dominic Armato back, it reunites many of the behind-the-scenes faces. Mike Stemmle is the main writer, doing everything he can to win the fans' affections; Ron Gilbert consulted on the design, specifically on the role of Elaine; and Dave Grossman is overseeing the whole project as design director. "The voices come fairly easily, and the humour, and I think everybody feels relatively good about that stuff," he says when asked how easy it is to step back into such a familiar world. "It's when we're discussing the underlying stories that we start to feel the peril, because if you screw that up the whole thing falls apart. But the peril motivates us to do a better job, and I think *Tales Of Monkey Island* has wound up with an excellent story."

> **"The peril motivates us to do a better job, and Tales wound up with a great story"**

As for the future, that will depend on how the current projects perform. But with *The Secret Of Monkey Island* topping the Steam and XBLA charts, and *Tales* proving to be Telltale's most popular game in its history, we're confident that the story hasn't finished yet. *Monkey Island 2 Special Edition* is inevitable, and we're told by our friends at LucasArts that next March might be a special month for fans. After that? Grossman says he'll be happy if the series continues to age appropriately: "Art evolves as people and societies evolve, and who knows how that will go? I guess my hope is that the series will take itself seriously enough to [stay] relevant, and not so seriously as to prevent it being entertaining. And I hold the same hope for the writers and designers on it."

And would those writers and designers include original creator Ron Gilbert, if he were invited?

"Maybe. Yes. Probably. Hmmm," he answers with typical certainty. "That's a hard question to answer. I'd love to do the real *Monkey Island 3*, or, as I called it, *Monkey Island 3a: The Secret Revealed Or Your Money Back*, but I wonder if I would be able to, given the span of years. I'm not the same person I was 20 years ago. It would be a different game than I had planned and the world of games is a very different place today."

BOSS/RUSH

WHERE WE SQUARE OFF AGAINST THAT END-OF-LEVEL BADDIE FROM YESTERYEAR...

BIG BOSS



GAME INFO



» **FEATURED HARDWARE:** MSX
» **RELEASED:** 1987
» **PUBLISHER:** KONAMI
» **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE



» [PSP] Set six years after *Snake Eater*, *Portable Ops* culminates in a battle with renegade FOX leader Gene, and leads to the origins of Outer Heaven.



» [NES] The non-canonical sequel *Snake's Revenge* made Big Boss a transforming cyborg.

Although the *Metal Gear* saga is synonymous with Nikita-wielding mercenary Solid Snake, it isn't his story that was told. From the early days of the MSX2 to the climax of *Guns Of The Patriots*, Kojima's tale of espionage and intrigue wasn't just about toppling bipedal robots or hiding in cardboard boxes, but the lofty ambitions of the world's greatest soldier, Big Boss, and his dreams of creating a world where soldiers could exist without exploitation.

Though recent outings portrayed him as an estranged father figure, he started out as Snake's nemesis. The series' unpredictable nature was well grounded when it turned out that the trusted FOXHOUND leader was commanding the enemy fortress Outer Heaven. While the twist (and misleading codec conversations beforehand) was typical of Kojima, the trademark cut-scenes were notably absent, the final battle culminating in Big Boss running around aimlessly before exploding out of existence.

Still, Snake did the running in the more cut-scene-heavy sequel. After waxing lyrical about the war – a theme that became a tent pole for the series – Big Boss chased Snake round a corridor surrounding a set of rooms. Scrambling from door to door collecting random components, a makeshift flamethrower could be made from a lighter and lacquer spray to turn the foe into a ball of flame, presumably finishing him off for good.

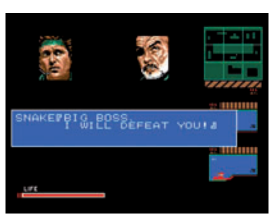
Skipping over Big Boss's turn as a transforming cyborg in non-canonical NES outing *Snake's Revenge*, the series saw his legacy grow. Snake's encounter with his twin brother revealed that Big Boss was used in the Les Enfants Terribles project, creating three cloned super-soldiers: Solid, Liquid and Solidus, the latter of which was the president of the United States and antagonist of controversial sequel *Sons Of Liberty*.

It wasn't until series prequel *Snake Eater* that the seeds of Big Boss's motives were fully sown. Playable for the first time and under the codename Naked Snake, his mission to recover a mass fortune left him betrayed by the US government after the actions of his beloved mentor and double-agent The Boss. It was here that he gained both his trademark eye patch from a young Revolver Ocelot and established his fearsome codename. It was also the first time he actually looked like Snake instead of a lawsuit-worthy doppelganger of Sean Connery back on the MSX2.

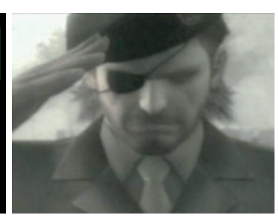
Snake's final outing in *Guns Of The Patriots* finally revealed Big Boss's role in Kojima's convoluted saga. After colleague Zero misinterpreted The Boss's will, the two inadvertently created the secret totalitarianist organisation The Patriots and placed Big Boss into a coma. Re-created from Liquid and Solidus's body parts, he and Snake finally made a truce in the climax of the game, before succumbing to the FoxDie virus Snake had carried for so many years.

Although Snake's story is finished, Big Boss will return in PSP outing *Peace Walker* to realise his Outer Heaven dream. Despite his villainous appearances early on, it's since been established that Big Boss was an intricate and misunderstood character with good intentions, and certified his name wasn't just lazy shorthand for his enemy status, but a homage to his respected and cruelly betrayed mentor.

"DESPITE HIS VILLAINOUS APPEARANCE, BIG BOSS WAS AN INTRICATE AND MISUNDERSTOOD CHARACTER WITH GOOD INTENTIONS"



» [MSX] In codec conversations in *MG2: Solid Snake*, Big Boss looks likes Sean Connery and Snake resembles Mel Gibson.



» [PS2] Sporting his trademark eye patch, Big Boss makes a surprising and dramatic return at the end of *Guns Of The Patriots*.



» [PS3] Reunited as ageing war-torn warriors, the father and son clones finally make a truce at the end of the saga.


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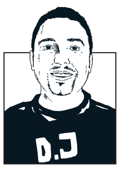
FROST BYTE

"YOU'RE AS COLD AS ICE"



- » **PUBLISHER:** MIKRO-GEN
- » **RELEASED:** 1986
- » **GENRE:** PLATFORMER
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** AMSTRAD CPC
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £2+

HISTORY

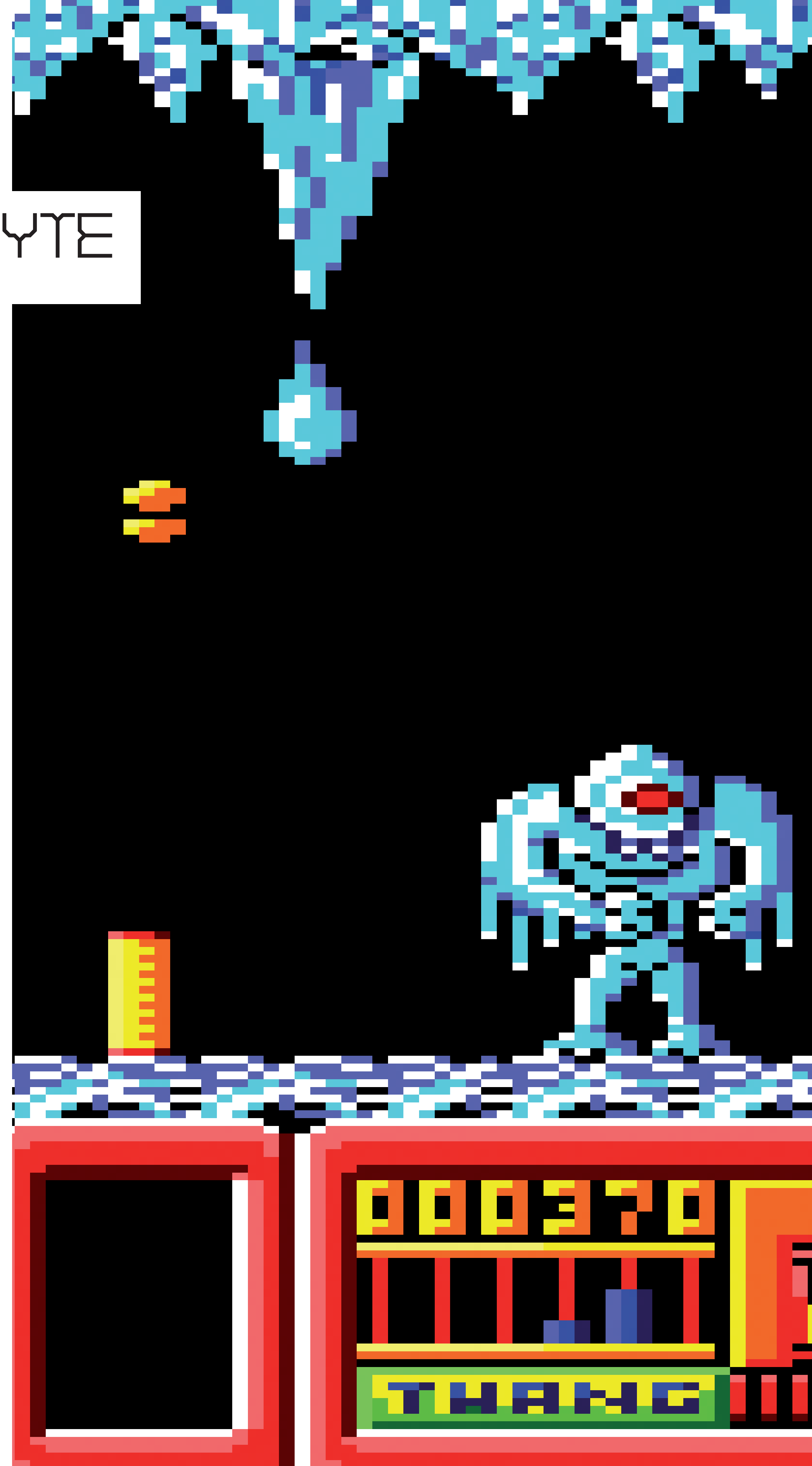


I picked up *Frost Byte* based on the glowing reviews I read in *Amstrad Action* and *Amtix*. And to this day, I've never ever forgiven them for it. Totally enthralled by the charming story line that saw Hickey the Kreezer rescuing his captured friends, and the truly gorgeous visuals and animation, I was utterly dismayed to discover one of the most unfair games I'd played for some time.

Take this screen to the right, for example. It's completely impossible to just walk past that falling drop of ice – I've literally spent the last fricking hour trying to do so – as instead you have to jump straight up into the air and then move to the right, praying you don't hit the ice drop on the way down. With the second ice drop, however, you can virtually stand within it – you can't get within three pixels of the first without dying – making it far easier to pass. How on earth does that make any bloody sense?

See? 23 years later and I'm still raw about it. Many seem to adore *Frost Byte*, but for me it just falls the wrong side of challenging and harks back to those games that were stupidly difficult because only the developer, who could complete it with his eyes closed, was testing it. Yes, there are loads of lovely touches throughout the huge game, and Hickey the Kreezer is wonderfully animated, but it doesn't make up for the frustratingly unfair gameplay that makes one screen an absolute cakewalk, while the next ends up upsetting your nan, because she didn't realise her beloved grandson knew words like 'f**k biscuits'.

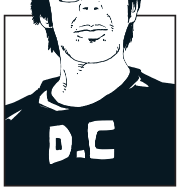
Back then, when new games came into my hands all too rarely – except, of course, when I had access to a tape-to-tape cassette recorder and a couple of C90s – I simply bit my lip and got on with it, never quite completing Hickey's quest to free his fellow Kreezers. 23 years later and an hour and a half of this unbalanced tosh is all I can manage. Isn't it funny how times change?




SAVED

CLASSIC GAMING ON A BUDGET

CHEAP AS CHIPS



If there's one thing we've learned about retro gaming it's that your money can stretch an amazingly long way if you want it to. Granted, a mint copy of *Radiant Silvergun* is going to cost you a small fortune, but there are plenty of other worthy titles that can be picked up for less than a fiver…

MERCS

- » **SYSTEM:** MEGA DRIVE
- » **RELEASED:** 1990
- » **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
- » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE



Allow us a spot of self-indulgence. We've just watched gripping Iraq war flick *The Hurt Locker*, and relived the pleasure of *Call Of Duty 2* on 360. Sky News is pumping out scenes of real-life wars in various locations across the globe, and now we're getting stuck into *Mercs*, that superlative successor to *Commando*. But are we getting battle fatigue? With *Mercs*? Are you kidding?

As a top-down run-and-gun feast of death, violence and destruction, Capcom's classic was mesmerising at the arcades, especially as you could get a few mates to tag along. With spot-on graphics and weapons as varied as they were powerful, *Mercs* was an awesome vertically scrolling shoot-fest and one we seldom tire of.

When Sega ported it to Mega Drive and Master System in 1991 – over a year after the game's April 1990 arcade debut – the original's multiplayer aspect was absent. In its place was Original mode, which featured a new eight-level version of the game that differed from the arcade and added an array of playable characters, all with their own unique weapons, including a homing missile and laser rifle. There was a shop too, which could be used to buy energy and medical kits, all paid for using medals inside shootable crates. Gamers were effectively getting two titles for the price of one.

It showed a willingness to go the extra mile. Fans of the arcade game would have been more than happy with a great port, but the extra 'game' was a stroke of genius, heading off negative reviews about the loss of multiplayer. It's striking that you don't actually miss that multiplayer action when reliving the game on console, and as anyone who has played the Mega Drive version on Virtual Console will agree, it remains as fun as ever.

And the plot remains as relevant now as it ever was back then, the action taking place in a made-up country called Zutula, where revolutionaries hell-bent on staging a coup have kidnapped the president of the USA. Sensitive to diplomacy, the mercenaries have been sent in to deal with the situation and, just as Sylvester Stallone would, you have to shoot everything that moves. Hell, even the trees have gotta go. Nothing is sacred in *Mercs*.

This tough game with its eye-candy graphics lost some of its charm when ported to home computers. The garish sprites of the Amstrad CPC version made for a largely unconvincing game, especially when you could rattle through it. The Amiga version fared better, but the Mega Drive was the most faithful and endearing, with Tiertex not doing as good a job with the computer ports as Sega did with consoles.

More than anything else, *Mercs* bettered *Commando*. That game's lack of power-ups, and faltering variety were major stumbling blocks, but *Commando* overcame them and went on to be the catalyst for games such as *Ikari Warriors*. In turn *Mercs* owes inspiration to *Ikari Warriors*, and it was a natural progression. Buy it in its original form or download it on the Wii. War is a drug, apparently, and *Mercs* is a sweet pill.



» [Mega Drive] Nothing to kill here, but it's only a brief respite.



» [Mega Drive] The fate of eight. Multiple kills is a blast.

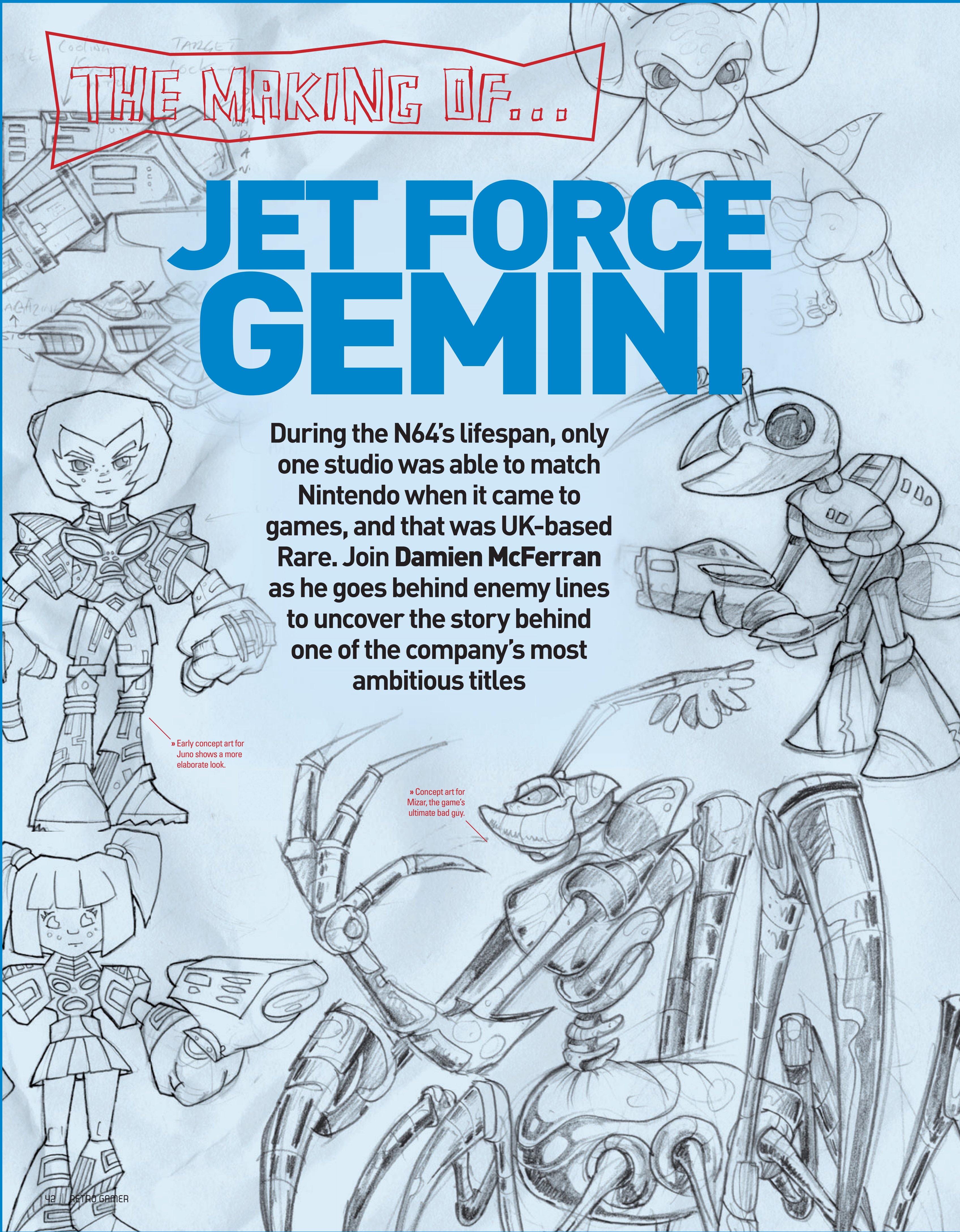


» [Mega Drive] All this scene needs is a spaceship.



» [Amstrad] An image from the CPC's introduction.


It's a jungle out there.
Swing through it
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New for 2011
947
iPhone Games Directory
Your unmissable guide to iPad, iPhone and iPod games
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859
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THE MAKING OF...

JET FORCE GEMINI

During the N64's lifespan, only one studio was able to match Nintendo when it came to games, and that was UK-based Rare. Join Damien McFerran as he goes behind enemy lines to uncover the story behind one of the company's most ambitious titles

» Early concept art for Juno shows a more elaborate look.

» Concept art for Mizar, the game's ultimate bad guy.



» [N64] The game's protagonists went through several design changes before they were finally rendered in 3D.

Back in the late Nineties, being an N64 owner was a testing experience. Having to listen to your PlayStation-owning chums constantly droning on about Lara Croft and Solid Snake was enough to put any Nintendo devotee in a bad mood, but the general lack of quality software towards the end of the console's lifespan was especially galling. Bearing this in mind, it's relatively easy to see why Rare is held in such high esteem with veterans of the N64 era. Thanks to a string of stunning releases including *Diddy Kong Racing, Perfect Dark, GoldenEye 007* and *Blast Corps,* the company found itself in a position of regard usually reserved for the Big N itself. Another game, which cemented Rare's relationship with its fans, was *Jet Force Gemini,* arguably the company's most innovative and inventive piece of software from that period.

An epic third-person sci-fi adventure, *Jet Force Gemini* saw the player assume control of a plucky team of futuristic freedom fighters – consisting of humanoid siblings Juno and Vela, cyber-pooch Lupus and Floyd the robot – as they attempt to release the galaxy from the vice-like grip of the evil Mizar. Work began on the title in 1997, and while Rare pooled some of its key talent to work on the game, lead programmer Paul Mountain was relatively new to the company. "I joined Rare as a software engineering graduate in 1996 and worked on *Diddy Kong Racing*," he reveals. "After *Diddy Kong Racing*'s completion in 1997, I moved to a new prototype project as the lead engineer. This was to become *Jet Force Gemini*."

Falling somewhere in between Rare's cute and cuddly platforming titles and its more mature first-person shooters, *Jet Force Gemini*'s inspirations were manifold. "It's fair to say that many games from the team's collective past influenced *Jet Force Gemini*, from Eighties arcade classics right up to the most recent titles of the day," recalls Mountain. "The free-roaming nature of *Super Mario 64* influenced the scale and the openness of some of the backgrounds and settings. In equal measure, the behaviour of the bad guys was a mixture of arcade space shooter formations and *Quake*-style 'attack and cover' mechanics. *Super Metroid* was also an influence on some areas of the game, such as the collecting and upgrading of weapons. I suppose, in short, we were inspired by all the good stuff we'd played and enjoyed playing."

It wasn't just in terms of gameplay that the title borrowed from other sources, either. "Visually, it tried to pull from all over the place," admits lead artist Lee Musgrave. "There are elements of *Star Wars* in there, *Aliens*, *Dune*, *Battle Of The Planets*, even *Stargate*. It was a real mix of everything and anything space-related."

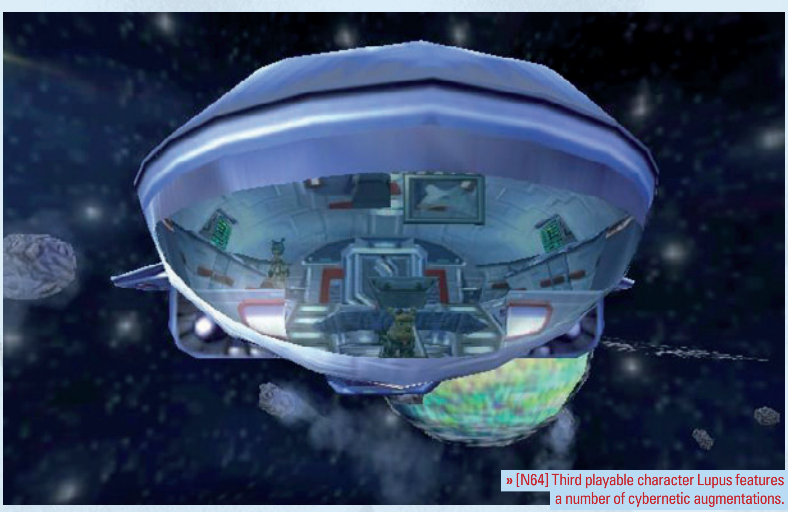
Despite Rare's close affiliation with Nintendo, the creative process was free from unwanted interference. "Nintendo took regular looks at the game during development and we listened to any feedback that they gave us, but it was essentially a Rare-developed title," explains Mountain. Outside pressure did result in one major change, though: the game's protagonists originally sported an overly cute visual style, but this was altered at Nintendo's behest. "I remember us showing Shigeru Miyamoto an early build," says Musgrave. "After some particularly candid feedback on the characters, we made changes."

However, it wasn't just Miyamoto's suggestions that instigated such aesthetic alterations, as Musgrave is quick to point out: "The art team grew in confidence and ability throughout the creation of *Jet Force Gemini* and started to push things harder technology-wise. There were elements that were redone just because we had learned how to do them better."

Although the N64 had been available for a couple of years, developers were still getting to grips with its innovative analogue controller, and the *Jet Force Gemini* team

"Many games influenced Jet Force Gemini, from Eighties classics right up to recent titles"

LEAD PROGRAMMER PAUL MOUNTAIN ON JFG'S INSPIRATIONS



» [N64] Third playable character Lupus features a number of cybernetic augmentations.



IN THE KNOW

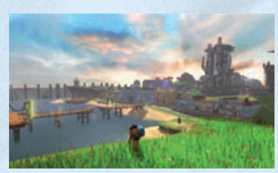
- **» PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO
- **» DEVELOPER:** RARE
- **» PLATFORM:** N64
- **» RELEASED:** 1999
- **» GENRE:** ACTION PLATFORMER
- **» EXPECT TO PAY:** £10+

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

WIZARDS & WARRIORS X: FORTRESS OF FEAR
SYSTEM: GAME BOY
YEAR: 1990

GOLDENEYE 007
SYSTEM: NINTENDO 64
YEAR: 1997

BANJO-KAZOOIE: NUTS & BOLTS (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: XBOX 360
YEAR: 2008



THE MAKING OF... JET FORCE GEMINI

was certainly no exception. "The overriding aim was to create a control system that was both fun and as easy to pick up and play as possible while retaining the variety of gameplay that we wanted," explains Mountain. "Although much of this was completed in the first half of development we continued to playtest and tweak throughout the project."

Just as it had enabled *Super Mario 64* to shine, the N64 pad became intrinsic to the *Jet Force Gemini* experience. "The analogue controller was essential to us to get the game playing how we wanted. A digital system could not have given the same level of control and targeting finesse," asserts Mountain. *Jet Force Gemini*'s control scheme is a two-part affair; walking around was very much like your typical 3D platformer, but entering a combat situation triggers a switch to a closer viewpoint. This unique system has since been replicated in games such as *Resident Evil 4* and *Gears Of War.* "The idea behind the system was to retain a character-based game – hence the frequent use of a third-person view where you see the character you are playing as – but to bring in some of the tightness and accuracy of a first-person shooter," reveals Mountain. "After many attempts to automate the change of view and targeting mode based on the context of the action, we settled on a manual system with the targeting camera fixed behind the character's head, as we felt this delivered the best gameplay experience." The decision was a success. "The solution we ended with is a beautiful thing," says Musgrave with a smile. "It feels very old-school to me: difficult, unforgiving, but ultimately precise."

One of the most refreshing aspects of the game was the way in which the player's progression throughout the various levels was handled. Initially, the only character available is Juno, but eventually other heroes are added to the roster, each faced with a slightly different route through the game world. "The characters all had an ability that was unique to them," explains Mountain. "These were playtested and fine-tuned against specific parts of the environment, which we developed to take advantage of one of the abilities. This enabled certain 'forks in the road' to be introduced into the game, where two characters would be forced to go in one direction but the third would have the option – providing they recognised the opportunity – to take a different route. For example, Vela was able to swim under the water, so she could negotiate areas like underwater tunnels while Lupus was able to hover for short periods of time, giving him the ability to cross wide gaps that couldn't be jumped. This introduced challenges into the level layout and timing of game events, such as the points where you unlocked or upgraded characters. These were resolved with a mixture of forward-planning and extensive playtesting."

While the game was pushing the boundaries of what was possible in an N64 action title, it also displayed some of Rare's famous experimentation – namely some brilliant racing mini-games. "We were initially trialling the introduction of a small hover ship," says Mountain. "This proved to be quite fun to fly around in so we wanted to do a bit more with it than simply hover about a few levels. Several members of the team – myself included – loved racing games and had worked on *Diddy Kong Racing*, so we knocked together some tracks and basic race mechanics to amuse ourselves with. Because these proved to be fun we decided to work them into the game and they formed the futuristic ant racing and the top-down arcade racing games."

When *Jet Force Gemini* was eventually released in 1999, it received overwhelmingly positive



SUDDEN DEATH

JET FORCE GEMINI pushed the N64 hardware to breaking point yet, for the most part, it managed to stay on the right side of acceptable. However, one area where the developer probably went a little too far was the deathmatch mode, inspired by the excellent four-player iteration previously witnessed in *GoldenEye 007.* "A good feature, but maybe a step too far," is Musgrave's opinion, but Mountain is less repentant. "I would stand by the decision to include this in the final game. Although it wasn't perfect by any means, we had many fun hours playing this during development and hoped that players would get the same enjoyment out of it. In retrospect, given the limitations of the screen resolution, the split-screen multiplayer would have been much more suited to a first-person camera view as this would have made the player's involvement in the action feel tighter and more focused. Although this view of the action would have gone against the ethic of the main game, to some extent, it is something I would certainly address if I could turn back time." Musgrave sums it up nicely: "It didn't do *GoldenEye* any harm, so we thought it prudent to include."

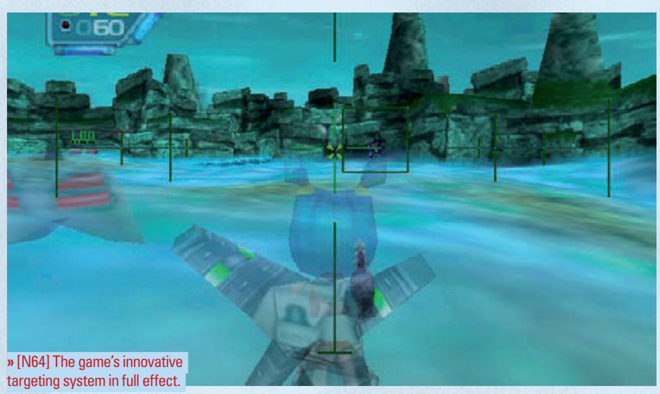




» [N64] Some of the boss encounters seriously pushed the N64 hardware to its limits. You'll struggle to find a better visual experience on the console.



» [N64] Saving all of the Tribals in each stage was the only way to complete the game – but they often died too easily, forcing you to replay entire levels.



» [N64] The game's innovative targeting system in full effect.





» [N64] *Jet Force Gemini* featured a wide range of different locations, ranging from enclosed spaces to wide-open arenas.

IT TAKES TWO TO TANGO

ONE ASPECT OF *Jet Force Gemini* that was arguably ahead of its time is the co-op mode. This feature is unlocked once the player has successfully reassembled the fourth playable character, the amusingly named Floyd the Droid. Rather than allow both players to go off and do their own thing, the second participant would provide fire support for the first. "Like every feature it needed thought and planning to get this in the game," says Mountain. "Because of the simple approach that we took with the co-operative play it made this less of a headache than it could have been. Floyd, who was your flying robot sidekick, was easier to position in the environment than a fully controllable second character. From a gameplay standpoint, this freed up the second player to concentrate entirely on helping out their playmate by targeting the bad guys, which meant the same environments could be approached in a subtly different way while, hopefully, keeping the game control as pure as possible."



reviews and became a vital weapon in the N64's armoury as it entered a period of uncertainty. With the recent worldwide launch of Sega's 128-bit Dreamcast, Nintendo could no longer boast that it had the most powerful console on the block. *Jet Force Gemini* was unquestionably a headline release, but despite this there were some voices of dissent in the crowd: many people felt that the light-hearted visuals belied the incredibly harsh challenge contained within. Much of the criticism was levelled at the game's insistence on having to save every one of the Ewok-esque Tribals in order to fully complete the game. "From a personal viewpoint, if I approached this today I would definitely be more forgiving on the requirement to save all the Tribals before being able to progress to the finale," admits Mountain. Musgrave shares a similar sentiment: "This feature was actually a late addition to the game and was quite a brutal stroke for us at such a late stage… I'm not sure we would make the same move again."

Another area where critics were quick to attack was the manner in which *Jet Force Gemini* pushed the N64 hardware to its limits, which resulted in what is arguably one of the best-looking games on the console, but also gave rise to painful bouts of slowdown. However, Musgrave remains unrepentant. "We grew as developers and artists throughout *Jet Force Gemini*. It was the proving ground for many people still at Rare today, and as we got better we found new and inventive ways to make the N64 sing… and strain."

Mountain agrees: "As a developer who wants to push everything to the limit, and beyond sometimes, there nearly always arises a craving for more power from the hardware." With this in mind, why, then, did the company not choose to make use of the recently released 4MB Expansion Pak? "Although the Pak was due to be released with *Donkey Kong 64*, it remained something that all N64 owners would not necessarily have access to," explains Mountain. "We wanted to deliver the same experience to all players and were confident that we could do this using the standard 4MB of RAM on the console. This decision allowed us to focus all of our efforts on getting everything that we wanted working on an unexpanded console, and I firmly believe that we were able to do this." Musgrave adds another explanation: "It would have made the production costs go up and the release timescale less favourable. We were confident that we could graphically outdo many games that were using the Pak regardless. We were right."

> **"Jet Force Gemini was the proving ground for many people still at Rare today"**
> LEAD ARTIST LEE MUSGRAVE ON JFG'S LEGACY

Both Musgrave and Mountain are still employed by Rare and they both have fond memories about *Jet Force Gemini*. "I love the epic nature of the whole thing – it really feels like an adventure as you play through, and I like the old-school feel too," gushes Musgrave. "I think the art team did a great job in pushing things as far as they could go at the time, and I also love the variety of gameplay in the product – proper value for money!"

Mountain is equally pleased with the end result: "I am very proud of the whole game. It was a terrific game to work on with an imaginative and enthusiastic team of game players developing it. I enjoy some of the slightly more off-the-wall humour that is dispersed throughout the game and, as an engineer, I can hopefully say this without ego: the graphics were beautiful. I am glad that we took on the challenge of producing a third-person shooter and also glad that we produced a title that, although challenging, never takes itself too seriously. It was fun to incorporate so many elements into the title with – to name a few – the multiple characters and weapons, the bosses, the ability to disguise yourself, the nightclub complete with DJ, the racing games and the Floyd mini-games hopefully providing great variety for players. It was a great project to be involved with and I feel very proud of what it achieved."

GRIBBLY'S DAY OUT



GRIBBLY GROBBLY

The game's star, Gribbly Grobbly is a one-footed, big-headed chap who lives on planet Blabgor. Blabgorians have massive heads because they're hugely psychic, and use psychic energy to fly around and carry things. Gribbly gets grumpy when things go wrong and can 'bubble' foes to death.



GRIBBLETS

Infant Blabgorians are adventurous two-footed tykes, akin to the offspring of a flea and an upturned saucer. They hop about, getting into adventures, but predators can flip them on to their backs, exposing their brains to the hot sun. Gribblets also tend to die when dropped from heights.



FERAL BEASTS

Blabgor is a dangerous place, populated by primitive creatures that rapidly move through a complex life cycle. In a couple of states they are benign, but mostly they're a serious danger to wandering Gribblets. Luckily, most primitives can be killed via a quick bubbling from a protective Gribbly.



SEON

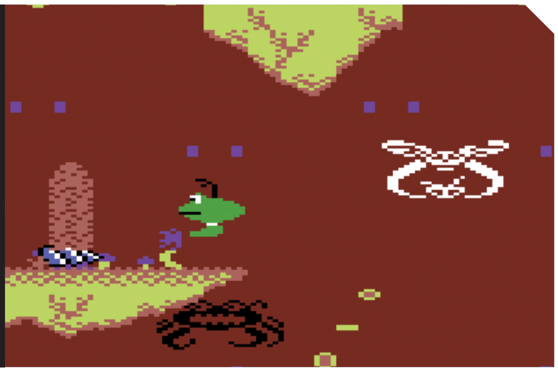
This crab-like creature (a highly mutated and unstable Blabgorian) is, bar colliding with the landscape, the game's main threat to Gribbly. Just a couple of hits from Seon is enough to drain Gribbly's psi energy and end him. Bubbles temporarily keep Seon at bay, but they don't kill him.

Although best known for overhead droid shooter *Paradroid* and horizontally scrolling blaster *Uridium*, Andrew Braybrook was quite prolific on 8- and 16-bit platforms, creating a sizeable catalogue of consistently great games. *Gribbly's Day Out* on Commodore 64 was his first, and it's very different from his other titles.

The action centres on the planet Blabgor and has you bounding and flying around the surreal, otherworldly landscape, trying to save unruly, awkward gribblets from hostile predators and return them to the safety of their home cave. Craig Grannell unearths the best bits of Braybrook's hard-as-nails classic, proving yet again that it's not easy being green.

MEMORABLE MOMENTS

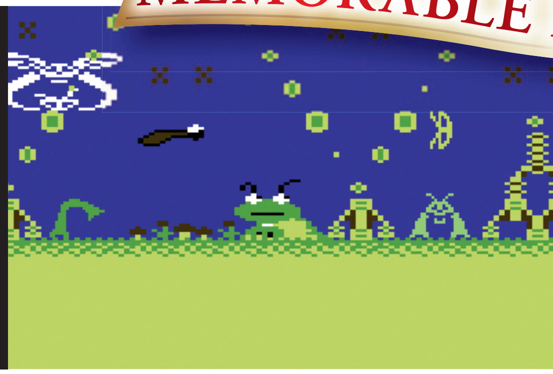
WHY IS IT A CLASSIC?



Originality, challenge and character

Like many games from its era, *Gribbly's Day Out* arrived before anyone was too concerned with conforming to genres. During development the game evolved into a mix of arcade action, shooting and exploration. The game is full of character and you'll need your wits about you, your mapping hat on, and a quick trigger finger because the game is tough – challenging for even the best players. Considering its Eighties roots, the game's world is remarkably full, and Gribbly smiles with you, frowns when things go wrong, glances around when stationary, and looks positively sick whenever his psi power runs dry.

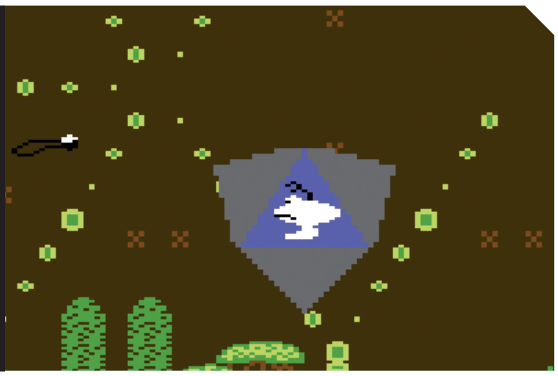
BEST CHARACTER DESIGN



The life-cycle of Blabgorian primitives

Braybrook created an entire life cycle for Blabgor's primitives. Relatively harmless seed pods fall, turning into bendy, worm-like topsies on hitting the ground. These dart along on their suction-cup ends, upending Gribblets. Eventually, topsies encase themselves in a chrysalis, rapidly emerging as dangerous and armoured stompers. Gribbly's bubbles merely repel these beasts. Should a stomper find a helpless Gribblet it mutates into a flapper, whisking the infant away to its doom – unless our green hero is quick enough to kill the flapper and catch the then-plummeting Gribblet.

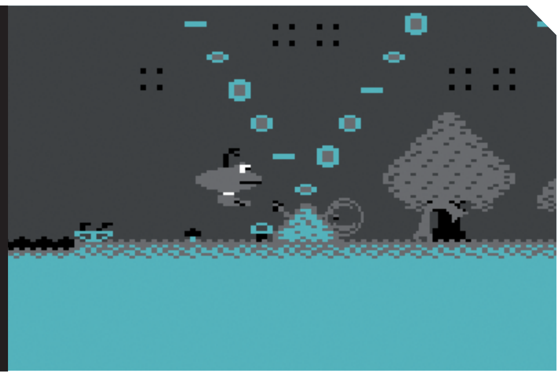
BEST OBSTACLE



Stuck in the web

Gribbly's world is full of hazards, including floating islands and complex cave formations. When bouncing along the ground, Gribbly's relatively safe from harm (as long as he doesn't try to go for a dip) but all these things cause mayhem for a flying Blabgorian. However, the energy web is the most complex, challenging component. Designed to hinder Seon, it blocks your path, and contact with it is painful. Switches enable sections to be turned on and off (affecting your score accordingly), and the entire web vanishes when only a single Gribblet is left for rescue, enabling Seon to hunt you down.

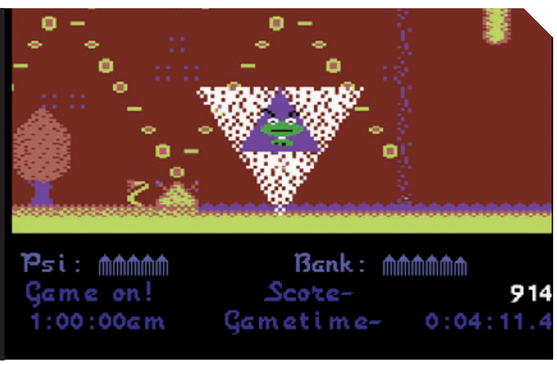
BEST NON-GAME THING



Options for rubbish TVs

Back in the Eighties, many children had to make do with beaten-up old black-and-white televisions, and games looked, well, rubbish on them. *Gribbly's Day Out* was another matter altogether, offering a carefully coloured black-and-white mode that looked great if you didn't have a colour set. Front-end options went further than most in other ways too – the game includes a clock, ensuring that you would never forget to do your homework, or, as is the case in the present day, write and file an article for **Retro Gamer** after getting distracted by wanting to save just one more Gribblet.

BEST MECHANIC



Success-based progress

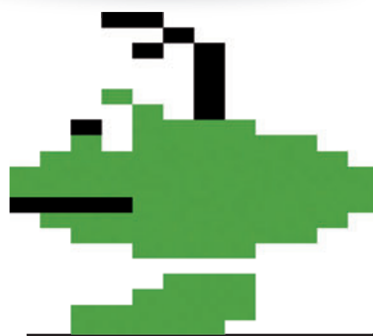
Even today's arcade games mostly move you on through the levels in a strictly linear fashion, and this was almost always the case in the early days of 8-bit gaming. Andrew Braybrook took a very different approach with *Gribbly's Day Out*. Save only the minimum number of Gribblets and you advance to the next level. Save more of the wayward infants, however, and Gribbly's confidence inspires him to skip up to three levels. Note: Gribbly's his own man (well, his own one-footed frog-like thing), and so he may well skip just one extra level even when all Gribblets are saved.

STANDOUT MOMENT



Meeting Seon

There's something especially creepy about nasty, vicious-looking characters lurking in otherwise charming and cartoon-like games. And so it is with Seon the mutant Blabgorian. As you draw near to him, you hear his crab-like scuttling and gnashing, and even if he's stuck behind the web, you'll steer well clear. However, when the web comes down and you're pursuing flappers and Seon enters the scene, the game turns from a precision-based adventure into a frantic and frenetic battle for survival. The change of pace adds another great ingredient to a varied, top-quality and underrated Braybrook creation.



What the press said… ages ago

Zzap!64 90%

"This game is unashamedly cute and benefits greatly from it. The scenario, control methods and characters make it tremendously original and terrific fun to play. The graphics are excellent and distinctive and the sound effects delightful. The levels get really tough and all this combined makes a brilliant game."

C&VG 8/10

"In his first original game for Hewson Consultants, Andrew Braybrook could be on to a winner with *Gribbly's Day Out*. It's fun to play […] but the real star is Gribbly. His large eyes, comic expressions, and bubble-blowing antics are a real treat."

What we think

Nearly 25 years on, *Gribbly's Day Out* remains a great videogame, especially in its smoother *Special Day Out* incarnation. Sure, it's challenging and somewhat unforgiving, but master the controls rather than fighting them, explore the levels, and learn how everything works, and hours of frustrating fun are yours for the taking.



IN THE KNOW

- **PLATFORM:** C64
- **DEVELOPER:** ANDREW BRAYBROOK
- **PUBLISHER:** HEWSON CONSULTANTS
- **RELEASED:** 1985
- **GENRE:** ARCADE/COLLECT-'EM-UP
- **EXPECT TO PAY:** £1

THE TRICK OF

Although Resident Evil got horror recognised as a valid sub-genre, games were scaring enthusiastic players long before a zombie dog crashed through the window of a haunted mansion. Sometimes this was a design goal. Other times it was a happy coincidence. Tim Henderson was once scared of Space Quest



THE TREAT



[PC] *System Shock 2* arguably perfected the formula, but there's not been a lot like it since.

It was a few weeks ago now. I was at a former workplace, chatting with James, an older member of staff who had been gaming since before I was born. Typically James is liable to go on about trying and failing to emulate the consoles of his glittery-sounding youth, but this time his reminiscing went as far back as *Rescue On Fractalus!*, the first game to ever make him come close to soiling himself. This game is only a year younger than me, and yet it was terrifying gamers over ten years before *Resident Evil* became a household name.

"I was getting pretty good at it," he recounts, his fingers clenching the stubble on his chin in a theatrical gesture of thought. "The basic premise was that you had to rescue crashed pilots. You could always notice them by these little white helmets that they wore. You'd have to land close to them, and then switch off your shields and open the hatch when they knocked," James laughs, his voice deep and yet somehow laced with childish cruelty, "or you could just not open the door for them. The knocking – tssh, tssh, tssh – would become slower until eventually the pilot suffocated.

> "Games these days strut about like peacocks. There's a complete absence of subtlety" BEN CROSHAW

But one day I noticed that the pilot in question wore what appeared to be a green helmet in place of a white one. I froze, unsure how to react. He ran up and knocked on the door – boom, boom, boom – and I just sat there, scared of this unknown quantity. There was something fishy going on. With a lump in my throat, I decided to leave him behind. I must have re-engaged my shields just in time. I jumped when an alien face – an alien, not a green helmet – appeared on my windscreen. Apparently, had I not done this, he would have ripped me and my passengers to pieces."

Although his memory may be a little patchy, James's experience has affected him quite profoundly. The way that *Fractalus!* compensated for all its technical shortcomings by playing with its own rules and messing with the player's mind resulted in a product that, as claimed by its own lead developer, David Fox, in an interview with Halcyon Days, was "the first game to really scare people."

Scared of money

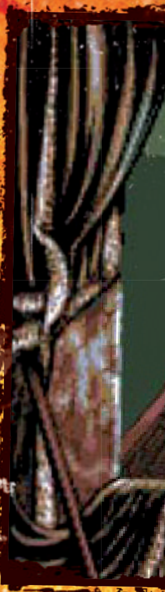
Multiple similar stories of people being scared by the game can be found online, proving that you don't need textured polygons and 7.1 audio in order to get people close to regurgitating their hearts. In fact, Ben 'Yahtzee' Croshaw, a hobbyist game designer now better known for speaking quickly, pins the failings of many current-generation horror videogames on their budgets and sky-high production values.

"The games industry is a fast grower and a lot of money is now being put into the development of mainstream games, and consequently the games like to show off that money," Yahtzee notes as he warms himself up for a rant on one of his favourite topics. "Games these days strut about like peacocks flashing every last cent, and that means a complete absence of subtlety. *Dead Space* was noisy and frenetic with very little suspense or pacing. Violin shrieks dependably occurring every single time a monster appeared on screen quickly became rather silly."

Dead Space is a favourite whipping-boy of Yahtzee's. A critical darling from last Christmas, it's true that an amount of subtlety has been crushed under Isaac's weighty boots. It's a game that relies largely on its technology for its scares, and while technically an excellent horror-themed shooter, when its ability to jangle a few nerves is scrutinised, its flash visual effects and sublimely noisy audio fail to stand up. "Sometimes I feel that games were a lot more thoughtfully produced when they had more limitations," Yahtzee adds. "Remember, it was memory conservation that brought us the iconic and hugely effective fog of *Silent Hill*."

While a similar reason was responsible for the 'kryptonite fog' in the terrible *Superman 64* game, it's

THE TRICK OF THE TREAT



true that *Silent Hill* was at its very best when adapting an approach to terror that has more in common with Japanese tradition and an era gone by rather than trying to mimic *Resident Evil*'s then-unprecedented and eye-poppingly amazing jump scares and spurts of zombie blood. Yahtzee fondly recalls a common scenario from *Beyond The Forbidden Forest* on Commodore 64 that could freak him out with clockwork efficiency: "I could walk through pixellated foliage for ten minutes and never find anything, then turn around and – bam – giant scorpion in the face, gory death, traumatic music. Very nerve-wrackingly paced," he says before moving on to the crux of his all-time favourite horror title: *Silent Hill 2*.

THE POWER OF FOG

It's the sense of loneliness in the second *Silent Hill* game – that cold, confident mind screwing – that ensured it was second to none with regard to "creating a uniquely atmospheric feel of dread and despair." This may in part owe a lot to having a protagonist who, unlike characters in games such as *Doom* and *Resident Evil*, is wholly lacking in firearms training. As such, while combat is present in the game, it hardly epitomises the focus or appeal, which may in itself have more in common with traditional PC adventure games than with the contemporary chic of making polygon models of zombies.

Putting his money where his mouth is before he was even given a real chance to shout off, Yahtzee's own games clarify that he's no hypocrite with regard to his thoughts on what works when it comes to scaring people. The most well-known of which is *5 Days A Stranger*. Telling the tale of professional cat-burglar Tribly, *Stranger*, with its primitive visuals and sparse audio, leans almost entirely on the quality and pacing of its story for its sense of dread. By trapping Tribly in a mansion with four other people, it forces gamers to make do with only their wits and ability to think things through. Fear is used as a psychological tool, freaking the player out through a mixture of disturbing back story and their own imaginations.

Similar to the fog in *Silent Hill*, it's possible that Yahtzee chose adventure games because of restraints – tools such as game-creation suite AGS (Adventure Game Studio) allow for adventures to be built by budding creatives who otherwise may have a limited coding skillset. But Yahtzee is confident in the point-and-click genre's relevance to such subject matter: "Among videogame genres, traditional adventure is a very good match-up with horror because it's one of the few genres that doesn't require the main character to use combat. The less capable the protagonist appears, the more effective the scares become."

Combat is an icky area, and one of frequent debate for horror games, or at least those that aim to scare at times. Beef up the player too much and it becomes much harder to frighten them; intentionally cripple them too greatly and there will be inevitable and valid complaints of broken gameplay. If there's one consistency, however, it's that it's almost never the combat itself, so much as the moments in between, that can truly generate chills.

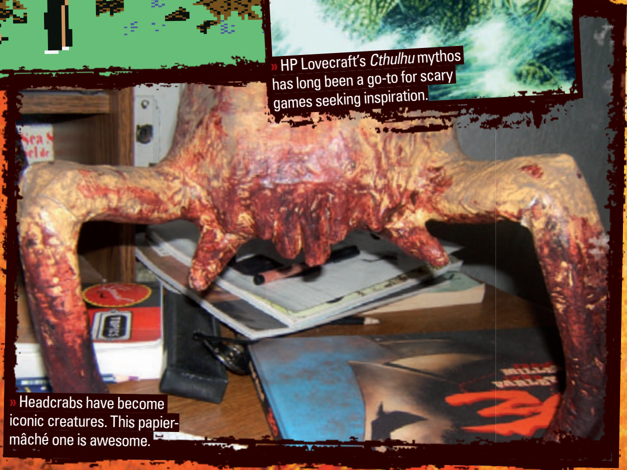
"The less capable the protagonist, the more effective the scares" BEN CROSHAW



» [C64] *Beyond The Forbidden Forest* was the first game to ever truly scare Yahtzee: it was the moments of silence and still that did it.



» HP Lovecraft's *Cthulhu* mythos has long been a go-to for scary games seeking inspiration.



» Headcrabs have become iconic creatures. This papier-mâché one is awesome.

THE POWER OF THE PEN

In this regard, many of the truly terrifying games of ages past may owe a greater debt to literary influences than they do cinematic ones. The original *Alone In The Dark*, debatably the father of survival-horror and certainly the first three-dimensional iteration, was packed to the gills with HP Lovecraft references. Openly throwing around references to the *Necronomicon* and *De Vermis Mysteriis*, the first of the *Alone In The Dark* game drew from the wells of words and imagination, presenting players with combat that was not only sparse, but could also be resolved by less direct means than a brick to the face. This all went sour in the sequel, either because the rights to Lovecraft's *Cthulhu* mythos had been lapped up or because the original development team decided to abandon ship rather than steer it down the more combat-heavy course that *Alone In The Dark 2* eventually took.

But this isn't to say that combat can't have its place in a land of fear. Tony Oakden, producer for the PC version of *BioShock*, is open about *System Shock*'s evolution, and especially its influence. Rightly describing the first game as "a difficult beast to master or really understand", he is quick to observe the evolution of first-person shooter control schemes by the time the sequel



[PC] Tim Henderson's parents wouldn't let him play *Darkseed* when he was younger. Images like this do a lot to explain why.



[PS2] There have been several further sequels, but *Silent Hill 2* remains the pinnacle of the series. To many, it remains the pinnacle of horror gaming.



As a very early example of stealth gameplay, the original *Castle Wolfenstein* caused John Romero's heart to stick in his throat.

hit: "*System Shock 2*, on the other hand, is much closer to a modern FPS and therefore more accessible… [it's a] very scary game", he notes, highlighting the power of the game's audio and storytelling to scare players who have been empowered with a swift, agile control setup.

Tony then goes on to speak of how *BioShock* veered even closer to traditional shooter territory, but nonetheless learned valuable lessons from its spiritual forebear. "One of the scariest bits for me in *System Shock 2* was the monkeys… you could usually hear them well before you saw them. That also applies to the roof crawlers in *BioShock* who you could hear scurrying across the roof." Looking further than just *Lovecraft's* overused work, however, he makes special note that "Ken Levine cites an enormous range of literature as a source of inspiration for *BioShock*", singling out Ayn Rand's monstrously large novel *Atlas Shrugged* as a particularly important influence.

Nightmares

There is something that is often overlooked with regard to horror videogames, and that this is the effect that working on such titles can have on their creators. Keeping the following nightmare in mind, it's perhaps no surprise that Tony decided to leave mainstream games development, setting up the friendlier faced Charlie Dog Games instead: "I have just got out of the bathysphere in the great station. I walk up the steps and on to the station platform. But this isn't the broken Rapture in the game. This is a beautiful utopia. The people are all laughing and smiling and having fun, children are running along the platforms, playing with

5 Games Worth Playing

Share Yahtzee's feelings towards Dead Space? Baffled by the inclusion of co-op in Resi 5? Then look to the classics…

System Shock 2



01 It takes talent to make a player feel as lonely as the *System Shock* games did. The sequel did a lot to improve on the original: the sharper visuals and proper mouse look made a huge difference, and the quality of the audio unleashed true anxiety. If the audio logs left by now deceased crew members didn't unnerve you, seeing the word 'run' painted on the wall in blood clearly was.

Silent Hill 2



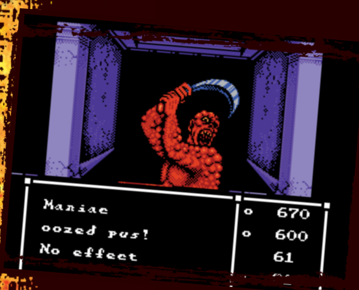
02 For many, this game set the benchmark for console horror games nearly a decade ago. Eschewing functional combat in favour of providing players with a character who was better trained at mourning his dead wife than in hitting things with a spade, it delved deep into a twisted, misty town that slowly began to draw palpable metaphors to the subconscious. A classic yet to be bettered.

5 Days A Stranger



03 Before Zero Punctuation became a plush toy-manufacturing phenomenon, Yahtzee spent a lot of his time designing videogames. The primitive, lo-res visuals betray his skill as a writer and designer first, and that of an artist much further down the list, but this game is modern proof that you don't need advanced lighting to excite and creep out your audience.

Sweet Home



04 Retrospectively recognised as the first survival-horror game by many critics, playing *Sweet Home* confirms it wasn't just *Alone In The Dark* that paved the way for *Resident Evil*. Taking place in a haunted house complete with animations of opening doors, the player was tasked with getting the five characters out alive. The combat gives it a horror-themed JRPG vibe.

Gabriel Knight: The Sins Of The Fathers



05 It's a pity the novelisation of *The Sins Of The Fathers* wasn't a success, because this is one of the few games that deserved such treatment. Tackling a tale of a voodoo cult in New Orleans, *Gabriel Knight* pulled no punches, and got away with it thanks to some of the best voice acting of its time, bringing character to one of the most mature games made to date.

5 THINGS THAT WE'D RATHER NOT MEET

Just be glad they can't escape from inside your screen...

Pyramid Head (Silent Hill series)



01 Featured most prominently in *Silent Hill 2*, Pyramid Head gets points simply for his disturbing appearance – something perhaps attributed to the recognisable, lost humanity behind a mask that only a masochist or a tortured individual would wear. It hurts your soul just to look at him as he lays into a couple of store mannequins, and he's more than capable of cleaving a man in two.



Shodan (System Shock series)

02 Rogue AI always makes for a good horror character. This may be because an artificial intelligence acting of its own free will automatically evokes existentialist ideas about our own humanity, and therefore makes us more scared and insecure. And Shodan is among the worst of the bunch. Not only does her existence cause you to question your own worth and existence, but she is also a maniac who happens to want you dead.

The Ship's Voice (Space Quest 1 VGA)



03 Being told that you have "15. Minutes. Until. Detonation" before you've been introduced to the gamespace, or even the interface, is never, ever cool. Add to the mix patrolling alien soldiers and you have enough to give a kid playing his first adventure game on his first family computer nightmares for weeks. Space is scary, no matter how much spoof you inject it with, although it probably didn't help that the visuals didn't configure correctly.



Pinky (Doom)

04 Pink is not a frightening colour. It's the colour of girl's bedrooms, Hello Kitty paraphernalia and the name of a douche pop/rock star. Because of this, it's easy to forget just how commonly the colour occurs on a person once the skin has been removed. Pinky is the name affectionately bestowed upon *Doom*'s demons. They're large, fleshy creatures that, like all boys scarred by a girlish name, feel that they have a lot to prove.

Headcrabs (Half-Life series)



05 These creatures are the sole reason Darran is unable to ferry the Turkey from the fridge to the oven on Christmas Day without jumping. *Half-Life*'s Headcrabs are the most ironically terrifying creatures to ever exist within a videogame. Even before they mutated to become black and poisonous in *Half-Life 2*, these suckers had serious specialisation in making gamers jump, knocking their knees against their desks, and then yelping like scared guinea pigs.

hoops and spinning tops, *The Sun Has Got His Hat On* is playing merrily through the Tannoy. I look up and through the high, arched windows I can see whales and fish swimming overhead. I walk along the platform smiling and saying hello to the people I meet and then enter the elevator. I get out on 'my' floor and go into 'my' apartment. And there sitting at the table are my wife and children. My wife smiles at me and says 'welcome home, honey', and then in the distance the screaming starts…"

CHAINSAW!

Perhaps it would be inappropriate to speak of classic horror games without making mention of the big daddy of the frantic 'holy shit did you just see that!?' variety: *Doom*. Developed over what would be considered a luxuriously short time frame by today's standards, *Doom*'s three-dimensional technology was revolutionary in 1993, and it allowed for the first game that was perhaps able to tap into our primitive subconscious and provide us with a depiction of Hell that we could convince ourselves was real. Having no time for false modesty, John Romero is up front and honest about the game he feels most influenced id's image-child: *Wolfenstein 3D*, he replies. "There were no other FPS titles around. In fact, it was a bit of work during development to break out of the *Wolf3D* design mode."

This is hardly revolutionary in itself, but it does bring to the table a curious familiarity with Romero's stories of the games that scared him when he was younger. Taking a moment to form his words properly, he eventually comes out with the goods in relation to a "moment in the original *Castle Wolfenstein* when I was being pursued by the SS and I thought I had gotten away in a quiet room, just running for my life, when all of a sudden, the SS officer blasts into the room and yells 'SS'. That scared the hell out of me.

That was a different fear than the fear of 'Oh, I'm going to get caught by that monster' in a maze game, or 'Damn, here comes the laser, right for me' in a shoot-'em-up. I was being chased through a castle by a Nazi officer and running for my life and I got caught. Very different feeling."

This imagined sense of corporal reality – of scenario, odds and death – may be a part of what influenced *Doom*'s more terrifying edge. This took skill as Romero himself is quick to remind us that id wanted "you to feel like you had the power to overcome your enemies" and that they "weren't crippling you in any way." The player character in *Doom* is the hardest hard-ass that the Hard family on planet Hard ever produced, and as such, the enemies would need to be nastier, the situations more desperate, and the audio beefier.

Although going against his often-outspoken opinions with regard to horror gaming, even Yahtzee is willing to allow *Doom* its moment: "*Doom* is a rare example of a videogame that brings a solid experience as well as technical impressiveness", he muses, before clarifying his point. "*Doom* holds together by combining it with very strong monster and sound design that remains iconic and instantly recognisable. That visceral flesh-tearing sound of the Imp's melee attack still sends shivers up my spine."

Influence: Now And Then

BioShock
(AS PRECEDED BY SYSTEM SHOCK)

System Shock's influence on *BioShock* is hardly a secret – hell, it was even promoted as a spiritual successor. And in many ways it was, although it has changed somewhat to fit in with the tastes of the times and also to perhaps make a little money – something that *System Shock* was never terribly good at first time round. And yet, a lot remains highly similar: science fiction was replaced with steampunk; biomods with plasmids; and Shodan with a maniacal megalomaniac.

Resident Evil
(AS PRECEDED BY SWEET HOME)

The most well-known influence on *Resident Evil* is *Alone In The Dark*, and fair enough, without that particular adventure, survival-horror as we know it might not exist. *Alone In The Dark* dished up the polygons, cinematic camera angles and sparse assortment of enemies, but Capcom's *Sweet Home* laid the foundation. It established the haunted mansion and limited inventory that would again delight and frustrate players when *Resident Evil* came around.

Doom 3
(AS PRECEDED BY, ER… DOOM)

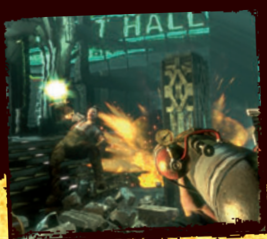
The scope of *Doom*'s influence is massive; it popularised an entire genre. None of the games that followed – with the possible exception of *Blood* – really dabbled with horror. Till *Doom 3*, that is. Although not quite the revelation that was hoped for, there's no denying that, although illogical from a common sense standpoint, being unable to attach a flashlight to a gun had its moments when it came to things going bump in the night. Those monsters had also become a lot more gruesome.

Metroid Prime
(AS PRECEDED BY… HRM)

Another game influenced directly by its own heritage, *Metroid Prime* was a masterstroke of franchise redesign. People feared the prospect of a first-person shooter, but we understood the importance of exploration, and the world they provided for this was nothing short of stunning. Visually striking, cleverly designed and painfully lonely with history rooted in its earth and trees, Samus was made to feel truly alone on an alien world since past its expiration date.

The Lost Crown
(AS PRECEDED BY GABRIEL KNIGHT)

Gabriel Knight's influence hasn't been felt far enough, but indie developer Jonathan Boakes has certainly felt the bite. He has crafted a clever tale of spooks that is richly rooted in Anglo-Saxon myth and culture.Taking on the role of a Ghost Hunter is little comfort to players of adventure games – an inability with combat and a lack of supernatural powers are all too far at the front of the mind. Instead, the story must be unravelled, one puzzle at a time.







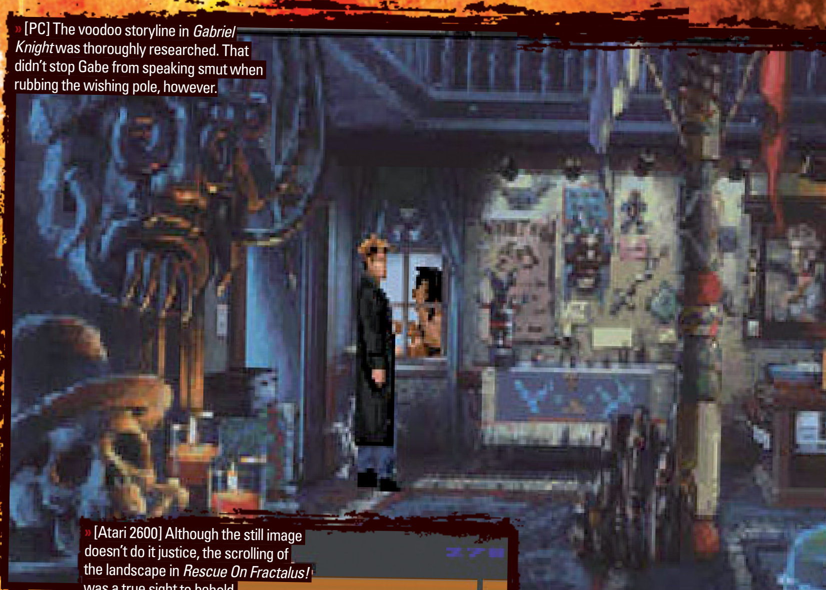
> **"My wife smiles at me and says 'welcome home', in the distance the screaming starts"** BEN CROSHAW

Hear Us Out

Game audio is notoriously overlooked. Like the ugly duckling, nobody ever pays attention, but everyone is affected when it pulls a turn and becomes a swan. *Doom's* audio was a standard-setter for the time, and Romero is keen to point out that "we flew [recent Lifetime Achievement Award winner] Bobby Prince to our office so he could spend as much time as it took to do all the sound effects."

Even in the days when something as low tech as midi was still a luxury, audio could drive a player nuts. It was the audio that painted such vivid images in the minds of players of *Rescue On Fractalus!*, crafting visual memories of events that never actually happened on screen. And yet silence can also be a great ally – indeed, in the early days of gaming there was no alternative – and as impressive as *Dead Space*'s surround sound may be, in a sense it lacks the gentle, chilling subtlety of an alien rasping on your ship in *Fractalus!* It plays with the screen more than with the mind, and probably dished out fewer nightmares as a result.

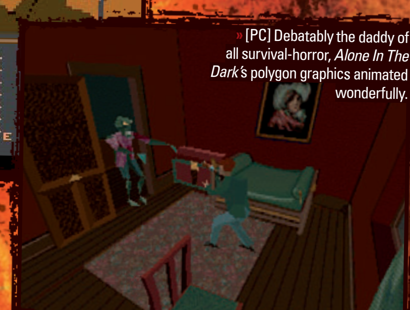
The core lesson perhaps is that people have not only the capacity for fear, but also of being able to enjoy being scared. Those sudden and carefully scripted moments that games have been using for over 20 years now serve a very important – or at least potent – role then. They forcefully remind us that right now, at this moment, we're still alive.



» [PC] The voodoo storyline in *Gabriel Knight* was thoroughly researched. That didn't stop Gabe from speaking smut when rubbing the wishing pole, however.



» [Atari 2600] Although the still image doesn't do it justice, the scrolling of the landscape in *Rescue On Fractalus!* was a true sight to behold.



» [PC] Debatably the daddy of all survival-horror, *Alone In The Dark*'s polygon graphics animated wonderfully.

WHY YOU MUST PLAY...

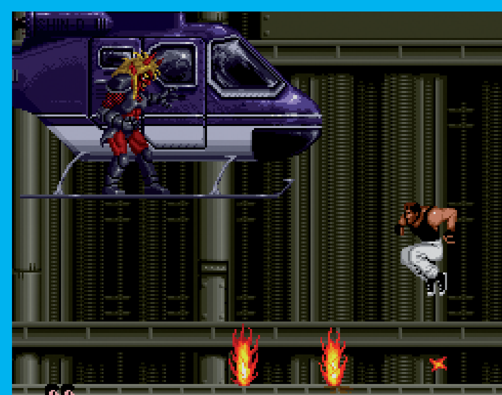
DRAGON NINJA



[Arcade] "Please, Mr Ninja, don't stand on my Porsche."



[Arcade] Acrobatic women attack on the train.



[Arcade] "Here he is. Let's take him down."

ACCORDING TO THE CHINESE ZODIAC, 1988 WAS THE YEAR OF THE DRAGON. AND ACCORDING TO JAPANESE ARCADE COMPANY DATA EAST, 1988 WAS THE YEAR OF DRAGON NINJA



IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** TAD CORPORATION
- » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** ARCADE
- » **GENRE:** SHOOT-'EM-UP
- » **RELEASED:** 1988
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £150-£250

It was the last hurrah for the short-lived pure 2D brawler genre. Like *Kung Fu Fighter, Dragon Ninja* only allowed movement on two planes. There was no moving 'towards' or 'away from' the virtual camera, and yet DECO's game shone brightly with huge, well-animated sprites, great sound, innovative levels, and the cheesiest plot in beat-'em-up history. "President Ronnie has been kidnapped by the ninjas. Are you a bad enough dude to rescue Ronnie?"

You (and an optional a friend) must take on the ninjas, using an array of kicks and punches. Holding down the attack button unleashes a flaming punch capable of felling multiple foes. Power-ups include extra health, extra time, knives, and nunchucks – and, boy, will you need them.

Dragon Ninja begins on a regular city street – a regular city street with ninjas attacking from all directions. Blue ninjas throw punches and kicks; greys throw shuriken, smoke bombs or makibishi (spikes); and red ninjas attack with knives or nunchucks. You're assailed by Lycra-clad women, dogs, leaping swordsmen… and that's just the first level.

Subsequent battles occur on the back of an articulated truck, a forest, a sewer, a train, a cave, and the enemy base. The transport-themed levels have a single path to follow, with dangerous gaps to leap over. Other levels have 'high' and 'low' paths, so two players can attack different enemies in parallel. Each zone climaxes with a boss encounter and level seven sees *Dragon Ninja* arriving on his personal helicopter, for the final showdown.

If there's one thing that sets this game apart from its rivals it's speed. *Dragon Ninja* has many fast-moving enemies all attacking at once. But since the 'dudes' can fight back with equal haste, the experience is exciting, not overwhelming.

During your mission, you'll spot some classic game references. Besides the obvious, there's an almost-subliminal nod to a famous Konami franchise in the train level. 'Kikuchi Co Ltd' (on the truck side) is the name of both a real-life automotive component manufacturer and *Dragon Ninja*'s designer. He put another 'Kikuchi' logo on a ship in his next game, *Sly Spy*.

Dragon Ninja underwent a name-change for its US release: *Bad Dudes Vs Dragon Ninja*. Dogs were added to the final battle, making it harder. Ronnie's thank you message was changed to

WHAT MAKES IT UNIQUE



RONNIE
Who wants to rescue a princess, when you can rescue the President of the USA? Sadly, it's not the one who played the saxophone.



FLAMING PUNCH!
Hold down your attack button, and your torso catches fire. Release it to perform a 'flaming punch' capable of knocking foes into next week.



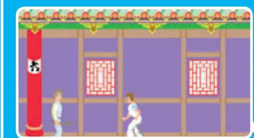
CROSS PROMOTION
Dragon Ninja was one of the first arcade games to advertise other titles – including *Karnov, Chelnov,* and *DECO* – by the same company.



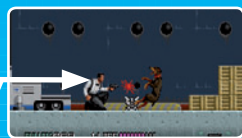
THEY'RE EVERYWHERE
Double Dragon was more popular, but three or more enemies on screen caused major slowdown. *Dragon Ninja* could handle nine at full speed.

INFLUENCES

The games that influenced and have been influenced by **Dragon Ninja**

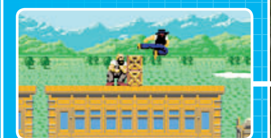


■ KUNG FU MASTER [ARC] 1984
The original 2D brawler introduced scrolling fisticuffs with an army of foes. It had it all: changing levels, a kidnapping, end of level bosses…



■ SLY SPY [ARC] 1989
Think *Dragon Ninja* was full of US patriotism? *Sly Spy* really flew the flag. This *Bond*-like classic also cross-promoted many of DECO's earlier hits.





■ EXPRESS RAIDER [ARC] 1986
This title allowed players to fight on a moving train, jumping from carriage to carriage. *Express Raider* also had dangerous coyotes to attack the player.



■ GOLDEN AXE [ARC] 1989
A fighting game ending on a serious note? After Ronnie and his famous burger, the gloves were off. *Golden Axe* has a great surprising epilogue.



■ GREEN BERET [ARC] 1985
This knife-'em-up introduced fast-moving foes coming from all directions. It was also the first platform brawler/ shmup with a two-level playfield.



■ SPIN MASTER [ARC] 1994
Data East kept the 2D scrolling platform/brawlers going, and *Spin Master* was a fun Neo Geo title. Two players and dual-level gameplay.

"The one thing that sets this game apart from its rivals is speed"

include the infamous "Let's go out for a burger, ha ha ha." And the credit sequence now had the dude(s) appearing outside the White House with Ronnie and his Secret Service detail. Unlike the original, there was no enemy roll-call, just the game credits accompanied by the presidential theme *Hail To The Chief.*

Gaming mags gave *Dragon Ninja* enthusiastic reviews. *Crash* called it "hardly original, but penny-pinchingly addictive". *C&VG* liked its "fast-moving sprites, with astonishing clarity". And *Sinclair User* was even more spirited, naming it Beat-'Em-Up Of The Year.

Dragon Ninja's home conversions began arriving just three months after those of *Double Dragon*. Data East was itching for a fight, running magazine ads with comparison shots of the various ports. The advertising copy pulled no punches: "*Bad Dudes* makes *Double Dragon* play like a dinosaur – one soon to be extinct." We're not sure the battle was so one-sided. Sure, *Dragon Ninja*'s 8-bit ports were better than *Double Dragon*'s, but the reverse was true for 16-bit owners.

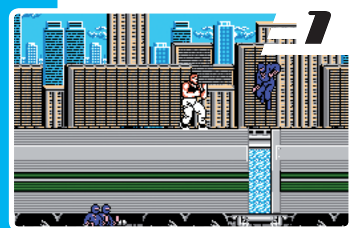
The Spectrum version impressed with its level accuracy, the Amstrad with its speed, and the C64 conversion with its detailed backgrounds and sprites. A year later, Data East released a NES/Famicom conversion, with terrible sprite flicker but accurate levels and gameplay. The 16-bit ports were another story.

The Amiga version scored 4% from *Amiga Power*'s Stuart Campbell. He suggested the programmer "forgot the jump function", which would render the truck and train levels impossible. The publisher disputed this, visiting the magazine to demonstrate the move. For the record, instead of a simple upper diagonal, you need to press up, then release the joystick, then press left or right. No, we can't do it either. *Amiga Power* then published a revised grade, increasing *Dragon Ninja*'s score by just ten points, to 14%. Ouch.

These days, a *Dragon Ninja* PCB will cost you around £30-£40, and fits any JAMMA cabinet with a horizontal monitor. *Dragon Ninja* never got a sequel. 2.5D brawlers like *Final Fight* and *TMNT* set the standard, and 2D brawlers went the way of Betamax video. But today we salute this fun title. So put on your sweatpants, strike a pose, and yell 'I'm bad'.

THE CONVERSIONS

How the various versions compare



1 NES

BEST VERSION

Yes, the sprites flicker terribly, but *Bad Dudes* plays really well on the NES, with fairly accurate level designs, bosses and music. For once, your flaming punch actually *is* super. But there are some strange inclusions, like the alternating two-player mode, and two hits required to kill red ninjas.



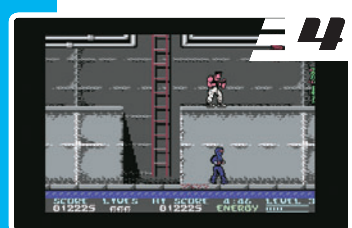
2 AMSTRAD

Amstrad fans get lots of fast-moving baddies, but some of the more interesting foes have been dropped. Punches and kicks connect well, and nunchucks/jumpkicks are quite deadly. However, the flaming punch is useless, levels are longer but less accurate, and the bosses are very, very stupid.



3 ZX SPECTRUM

Spectrum users can enjoy large, detailed monochrome sprites. The levels are more accurate than the Amstrad equivalents. And unlike the C64 port, punches/kicks work well. Sadly, turning around is slower and more frustrating than it should be. And the flaming punch 'auto fires' (instead of charging up) rendering it useless.



4 COMMODORE 64

Great music, backgrounds and hi-res sprites, but frustrating gameplay. Many foes have been omitted and those included require pixel-perfect hits yet injure you without any difficulty. You'll end up jumping around desperately trying to land a strike. And again, the flaming punch is a weedy, insipid joke.

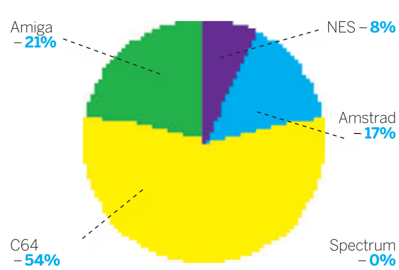


5 AMIGA

WORST VERSION

It has the original arcade intro and a two-player simultaneous option. Backgrounds are average, with lots of fast-moving but jerky sprites. You have the choice of reasonable sound effects or crap music. But all of this is irrelevant, due to the game-destroying 'jump' controls.

FORUM OPINION



"Wasn't there a PC-Engine version? I remember playing it on something that felt almost arcade perfect"
– Britnostalgic

"It must have come out around the time that we were upgrading to the new 16-bit machines but couldn't afford Amigas"
– paranoid marvin

If you like your games to play like part-time jobs, look no further than Paperboy. The early-morning slog endured by school kids everywhere is replicated brilliantly, except the kids pay for the privilege of stuffing papers into letter boxes, not the other way around

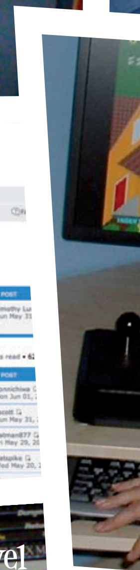












let's all play: Paperboy





Information

Publisher: Atari
Developer: In-House
First Released: 1984
Featured System: Arcade

First Impressions

Stuart Well, I'll let you guys in on a secret: I was never allowed to take on a paper round when I was nipper. It was the cause of many a heated argument with my mum, especially as most of my friends' parents were 'cool', allowing their kinfolk to get a taster of the real working world. Basically, my mum feared that I was going to be attacked by a burglar, set upon by break dancers or mowed over by a car that looked like *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*. I thought she was utterly bonkers… until the day I spied a *Paperboy* machine at my local arcade, grabbed its handlebar controls and slotted ten pence into its mouth, keen to see what I was missing out on. It was then that I realised just how dangerous delivering newspapers could be. I bought my mum flowers that day.

MattyC64c First impression: wow! This is bloody hard. You have to target the correct houses and avoid the obstacles on the footpath and the road at the same time. Still, the graphics were good for the time, and the gameplay is fun.

Timothy Lumsden Diagonal scrolling – that's what I first remember from back in the day – it just seemed odd to me to scroll at an angle.

Sepp Salerno It was always a little hard to handle, but *Paperboy* is as loveable as it is addictive and difficult… but I would say that as I think this is one of the greatest, most original titles ever.



thl It felt like replaying the SMS version of *Enduro Racer* but this time riding on a bicycle stacked with papers ready to throw on the street. The gameplay was potentially entertaining in that it showed you what it was like to be in that role. I didn't expect the road to become a series of obstacles that prove to be very challenging.

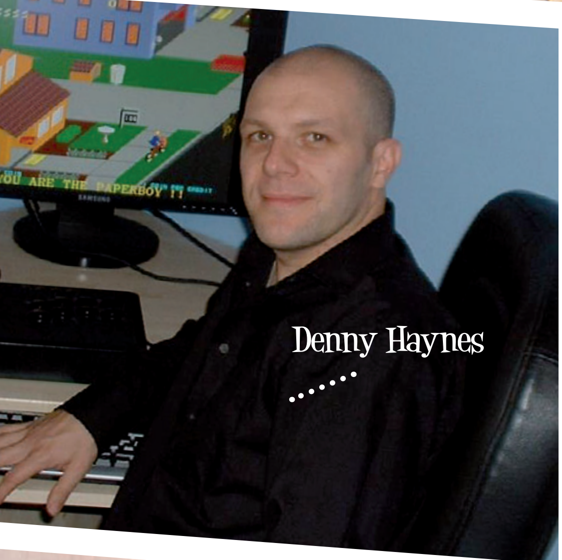
PacSuit My first dose of *Paperboy* was on an arcade compilation for PlayStation. It was completely different from the rest of the games on the compilation. While the others involve shooting stuff, this game involved you throwing… I mean delivering papers. I'd like to play *Paperboy* in an arcade, that bike handle controller looks a lot of fun.

Denny Haynes At the time, the graphics really stood out and the gameplay seemed totally different from what I'd played before.

What Makes It A Classic

Darran Well, for me, it has to be its timelessness. *Paperboy* still has bags of appeal today. It's a brilliant little one-off, and the fact you play a paperboy means that even today it's contemporary. The subject of videogame jobs has long been exploited – before in *Tapper* (barman) and since in *Shenmue* (forklift driver) – but







★ Go deeper: trivia trail

» In early arcade versions of the game there was a bug that allowed players to avoid the finish line and replay the day again.

» *Paperboy* is the first arcade game to feature handlebars, a control device later seen in *Hang-On, Enduro Racer* and *Prop Cycle.*

» In the home computer sequel, the player can assume the role of a papergirl. Equal opportunities and all that.

» Two sequels were produced: *Paperboy 2*, and the 3D update *Paperboy 64* released exclusively for the N64.

Atari's *Paperboy* is the one everyone remembers the most. It's arguably the best of its genre, and unarguably great fun to play. That's why it's a classic.

Dam It's a simple idea done well, and it's something a bit different. Good fun for ten minutes here and there, but not really much more I'm afraid as there's not much to it.

SirClive You can associate with the hero. An honest Joe doing an honest job – not so honestly, you may say, but he gets the job done. The bright graphics and great speech (for the day) make it one of the most humorous games available in the mid-Eighties.

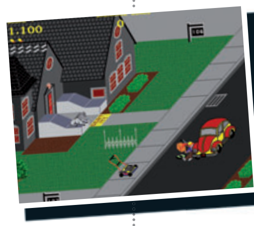
fredghostmaster *Paperboy* was just such an original game. The handlebars, the speech, the colourful fun graphics; it stood out among the other cabs at the time.

thevulture Don't get me wrong – as some popstar lass once warbled – I like it, I just think it's a tad overrated. I call into question its 'classic' status. And like Roy Walker once said… "It's good, but not the one."

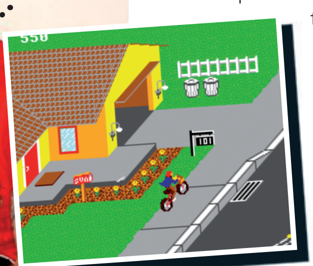
jdanddiet Its originality made it stand out, helped by the novel arcade control system.

sirclive1 At the time it was released I – like quite a few on here no doubt – was a paperboy so it was easy to relate to. I think it also offered a fair game. Unlike some coin-ops, you got a fair crack of the whip even if you were (at first) confused as to what you had to do. Also, the bonus BMX track at the end of every day was a great idea, the graphics are nice and clear and it had a good sense of humour.

Commander Jameson I think it's a classic that's well remembered. However, I think the majority remember it as such not because it had brilliant gameplay, but because it was such a different game. There was nothing else like it at the time. Those are words we hear a lot in this business, but in *Paperboy's* case, it's more true than most. What genre is it? It isn't even in a genre, it's so unique.



gman72 For me it was the music and the speech that made it a classic. Those funky tunes had me humming all the way home from the arcade and that synthesised Atari arcade speech always sends waves of nostalgia washing over me.



Sepp Salerno For me, everything about *Paperboy* feels right. And although it's knee-deep in Eighties flavours – you have to avoid break dancers, banana flag-waving buggies, and radical dudes who sidewalk surf on their 'fish board' skateboards – the gameplay itself has not dated at all. It's still fully addictive, compelling and well crafted. I loved the game growing up and I'm still drawn to it now – especially the NES port as the Commodore 64 version stinks – I remember sticking up for this game big-time in the playground when all the other kids said it was 'gay'. Hmmm. 'Who wants to play a paper boy!? That is so sad', Neal Cooke would always say, but he had a 2 Unlimited sweatshirt and a mullet hair cut so his taste was questionable. No matter what, I always stuck by *Paperboy.* Also, it's one of those rare games that will grab friends of mine who aren't gamers after a night on the pop, and suck them into playing it for hours.

Sel Feena I think that, as with most classics, *Paperboy* has that essential mix of accessibility that allows everyone to play and a real underlying challenge if you want to master the game. It also has that 'just one more go' factor, meaning that you can waste hours on it without realising.

PacSuit *Paperboy* was very different from all the other games. When most others involved you shooting aliens or driving a car, *Paperboy* put you in the shoes of a job most teenagers would get about £10 for. I can imagine kids using this as a simulator, like people in the army used *Battlezone.*

Timothy Lumsden Simulator might be pushing it a bit. I had a paper round for years, but it never involved throwing papers from my bike – mostly because I delivered to tower blocks on the local estate. But there were plenty of dogs and broken windows, so some points for accuracy there.

Standout Moment

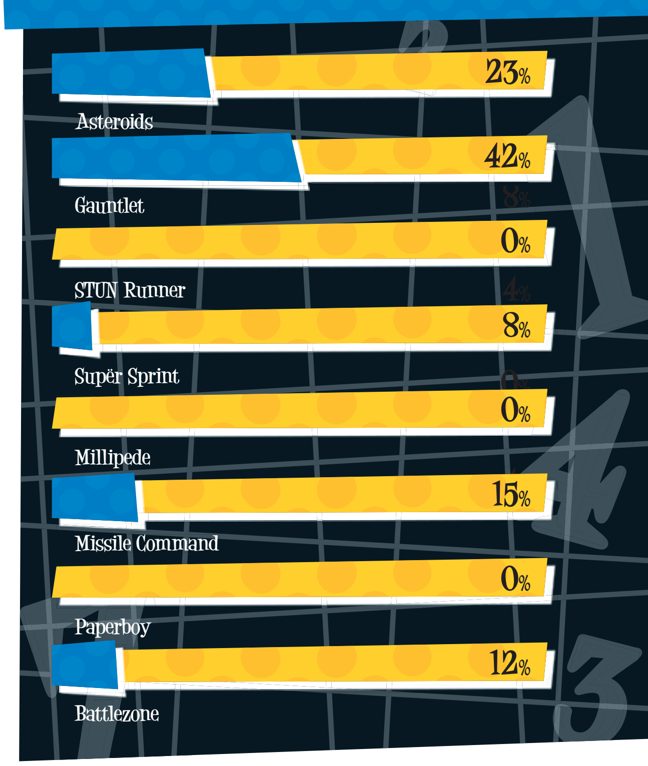
Stuart Tricky one, and not really a 'moment' as such, but I have to hand it to the brilliant job *Paperboy* does of transporting you to a suburbia in North America some time in the Eighties. As a result, you can't help but feel a real twinge of nostalgia hit you right between the handlebars every time you play it. Sepp Salerno's comment's (below left) sums it up brilliantly. Everything about the game – except crashing your bike – puts a smile over your face: from the streets' crazy denizens to the toe-tapping music and the lush, colourful graphics. Sure, it can be maddening at times, and by the time Friday rolls by you're looking forward to the weekend, but, hey, that's realism for you.

Fred83 Being bold by smashing windows and causing havoc.

fredghostmaster Completing the assault course at the end of each day for the first time.

Forum Poll

This month: **Best Atari Arcade Game**



let's all play: Paperboy

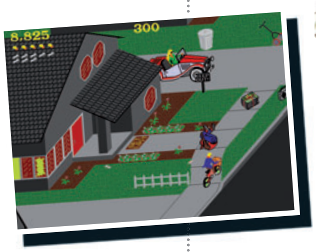


sirclive1 Making it across the road at the end knowing the bonus BMX track awaits.

MattyC64c That would have to be getting a decent number of papers delivered, and avoiding losing any lives. Pretty tough with those darn pesky dogs, people, cars and so on getting in your way. Smack!

Bub&Bob Doing what I would have done if I had been a paperboy. Ignoring the mail boxes and chucking the papers through people's windows.

SirClive For me it is when the two guys are brawling in the street and you hit one of them with a newspaper to make him fall over. The other guy then throws his arms up in the air as if he has won the heavyweight championship.



jdanddiet Smashing the windows of non-customers… and customers.

Zetr0 Has to be the BMX track… mind you, smashing windows is fun too.

Timothy Lumsden Pretending you're Elliott in *ET* and then realising you can't fly (damn you, R Kelly) and vandalising people's windows instead.

Sepp Salerno It has to be the BMX track at the end of the level, but playing it again now, I just love all those little dated Eighties obstacles. The geezers breaking the electric boogaloo on the sidewalk, the fishboard skateboards, it's like this beautifully pixelated time capsule. You half expect ALF, Mr T, or perhaps even Bergerac to step out from behind the suburban white picket fence and knock you down with one hand, reminding you of your wonderfully misspent youth.

PacSuit Realising that most of the stuff I do in the game, I can't perform in real life. Not only can *Paperboy* be a fun game, but it can also be a good stress reliever.

thl I'd say those odd looking obstacles where you came across people drilling, go-karting, break dancing and unicycling along the pavement. Plus crashing into the signpost, radio and passing car is likely to happen too.

Denny Haynes Biking past a creepy house, if my memory isn't playing tricks on me.

Best Conversion

Darran Well, I was impressed with the SMS version, which is superb and does a great job of capturing the spirit of the arcade game. The graphics are wonderful, the controls are responsive and the entire game is just a great and faithful port – a shame the same can't be said for the machine's port of *Enduro Racer*, which, rather oddly, took a decidedly *Paperboy*-style approach to its visuals. This is the better game and is up there with the likes of *Space Harrier*, *Operation Wolf* and *Shinobi* for great arcade conversions to have appeared on Sega's 8-bit machine. The only thing that lets it down is the music, which is truly heinous.

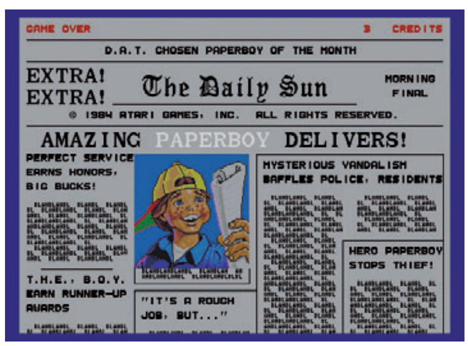
Classic game? You must be joking

Just because a game's praised, it doesn't mean that everyone is going to like it…

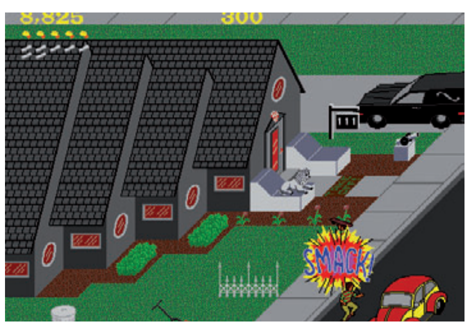
"It's not a bad arcade game, if a bit of a dull and repetitive one, and brick hard"
ipmarks

"I still don't see what all the fuss is about. It always seemed a pretty limited game to me. *Trashman* on Spectrum was always my door-to-door-services-'em-up of choice. Paperboy just doesn't deliver"
the_hawk

"Boring, repetitive, unfair. A terrible idea, executed badly. One of my least favourite games of all time"
Smurph

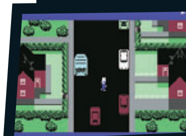


» [Arcade] Paperboy's efforts are documented in the front page of his own newspaper. It must have been a slow news week.



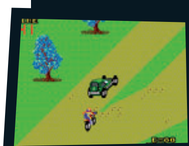
Further play
Similar titles you may want to try

Trashman
FEATURED SYSTEM: C64
YEAR RELEASED: 1983



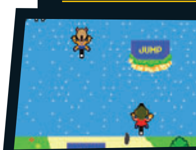
Like *Paperboy, Trashman* took an early-morning job and recycled it into a videogame (see what we did there). Anyway, playing the role of a binman, it was your job to collect rubbish, negotiating the various hazards and nattering to friendly customers for tips.

Enduro Racer
FEATURED SYSTEM: MASTER SYSTEM
YEAR RELEASED: 1988



Although sharing little in common with the arcade game, the original arcade version of *Enduro Racer* was a Sega super-scaler. The SMS version, meanwhile, was an isometric racer similar in look to *Paperboy.* This little oddity remains a cracking racer nonetheless.

BMX Trial: Alex Kidd
FEATURED SYSTEM: MASTER SYSTEM
YEAR RELEASED: 1987



If BMXs are your thing then why not give this quirky *Alex Kidd* spin-off a try? [Any excuse to get Kidd in the mag, eh, Stu? – Ed). It's basically a top-down racer of *SpyHunter's* ilk that finds Alex peddling through the various colourful looking stages until he drives into a starving hippo's mouth. True story.

Tapper
FEATURED SYSTEM: ARCADE
YEAR RELEASED: 1983



Tapper thrusts the player into the role of a barman, trying to serve the cool, crispy, heady, hoppy stuff while also trying to clear the empties and collect tips from a bunch of stroppy and inpatient cowboys. Simply premise but wonderfully addictive.

Paperboy 2
FEATURED SYSTEM: MEGA DRIVE
YEAR RELEASED: 1992



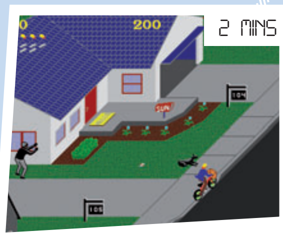
Paperboy's sequel never made it to arcades, but that didn't prevent it from appearing on a large number of home consoles. The game is essentially just more of the same paper-delivering action, except you can now play as a papergirl, you have a (useless) jump button, and the streets' isometric perspective switches direction.

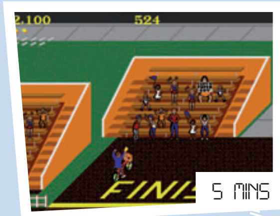
Moments in Time

The best bits of Paperboy and when they appear…

1 Bungled Burglary

It isn't all anarchy on the streets, you know. Even the local paperboy can become a hero by breaking up fights and maybe even thwarting the odd petty crime. In *Paperboy* it's worth keeping a lookout for any wrongdoing on the streets as a well-timed paper lob is sure to gain you extra points and win you favour with your customers.





2 Dirty Tricks

At the end of each street is a neat little dirt track where paperboy can chill out and unwind. Void of idiots, just full of precarious jumps and plenty of targets to launch papers at for extra points, these 'bonus' sections are good fun, but crash once and the section annoyingly finishes.

3 Dog Vs Paperboy

No game about a paperboy would be complete without a dog to terrorise the player, and *Paperboy* doesn't disappoint. However, the species the creator selected – a terrier – was pretty lame. Seriously. They could have gone with something a little more threatening, like a cybernetic Staffordshire pit bull firing rockets from its mouth.





4 What wolf!

Easily one of the strangest obstacles that the paperboy faces in the game are the stone statues that transform into werewolves and then act crazy, running out into the middle of the road. They're odd, tricky to avoid, and can sometimes be unsettling if they catch you off guard.

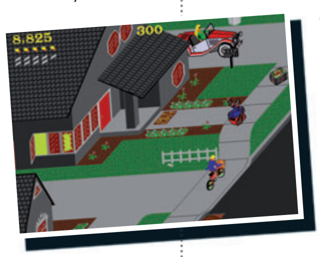
5 Grim Reaper

And if you thought the concrete werewolves were terrifying enough, popping up in the latter Middle Road and Hard Way stages, the Grim Reaper himself will materialise outside the distressing number of glum-looking funeral homes that seem to occupy every street. Hit Death with a well-timed paper to repel his unwanted deadly touch. That'll learn him.



Havantgottaclue I've only played the C64 version. A quick trip to Lemon 64 reminds me that it looks horrible. Must try the Master System version, it looks pretty good.

Dam Yep, definitely the Master System for me. It's the easiest to pick up and play, and is therefore more enjoyable than the Mega Drive or arcade versions. The NES conversion is so bad it's funny.



SirClive The Spectrum version is brilliant. Its black background and grim graphics remind me of getting up at 6am and doing a round in the dark before school in a cold and rainy Manchester.

thevulture The Master System effort does a good job of capturing the essence of the game.

sirclive1 Apart from the arcade version the only other one I've spent any time on is the Spectrum, me and a mate went halves on it, flew back to his house and when we got over the shock of the tiny play area and monochrome graphics (we played it on a black-and-white TV), we found it was just as much fun as the arcade, we actually wrote down every time we started a game so that we could work out whether we would have spent more in the arcades than the £7.95 it had cost us, sounds silly now, but that was part of the charm of buying a fresh arcade game back then.

Timothy Lumsden The dodgy handheld thing I bought at the market has a version on it, but God knows which one: maybe the NES? All the writing is in Chinese I think. Okay, I'll vote for 'dodgy possibly Chinese NES knock-off' as the best.

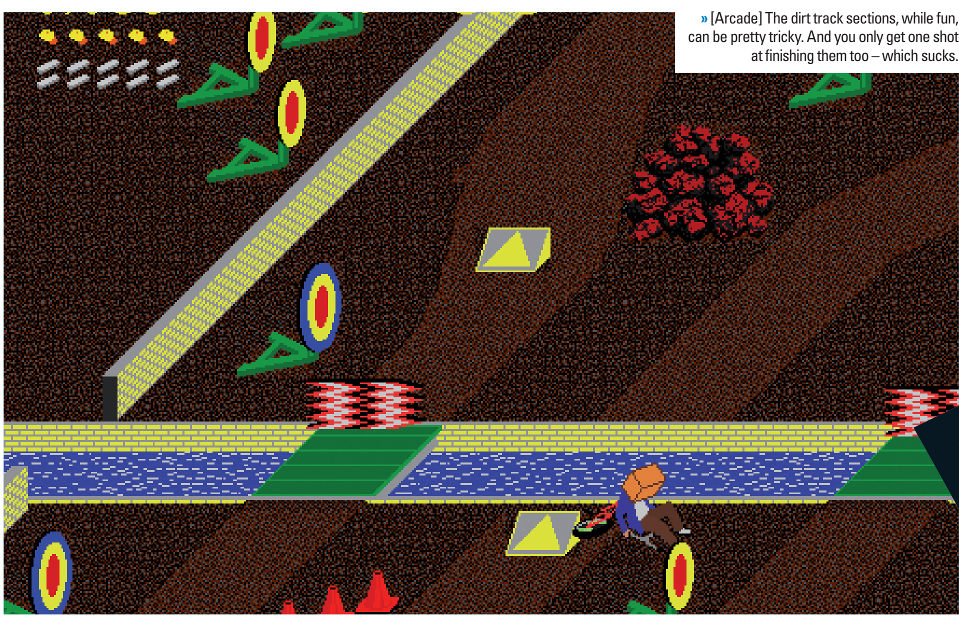
MattyC64c Purely from a nostalgic perspective, I'll have to go with the Commodore 64, simply because it was the only home version I had as a kid. With emulation, I really like the Master System version, which is nice and colourful.

Bub&Bob The Commodore 64 version isn't too bad and does capture the feel of the arcade, but none of the conversions are great in my opinion – but that's entirely down to the lack of handlebars.

clarance Commodore 16 version is the worst… by a long way.

Matt_B The CPC version is quite respectable: it has decent graphics and plays quite nicely too. It's just a shame that they didn't manage to get any sound into it.

Havantgottaclue I didn't actually realise that I owned the CPC version, because it's on a compilation tape – *Best Of Elite Vol 2* – which I got as part of a job lot a couple of years ago. The first thing I noticed was that it took at least ten minutes to load, which is unusual for an Amstrad game – obviously this isn't a turbo load. Anyway, I had a couple of goes, and on the first play I didn't get to the end of the first level and scored 4,200. The second time around, I got to the second level and found that space was extremely tight and I lost my remaining three lives in no time at all. I was surprised to see that my score was 4,800, only 600 more than in my previous go. No bonus for reaching the end of the level, presumably because I didn't get through the obstacle course. How tight is that?



» [Arcade] The dirt track sections, while fun, can be pretty tricky. And you only get one shot at finishing them too – which sucks.

Next Month's Game



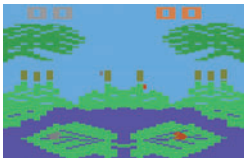
Beach-Head

Want to join in the fun? Then head on over to **www.retrogamer.net/forum** now.

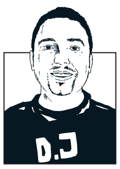


FROG AND FLIES

AND YOU THOUGHT FROGGER WAS FUN



- » **PUBLISHER:** COLECO
- » **RELEASED:** 1982
- » **GENRE:** ARCADE ACTION
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** ATARI 2600
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £20+



HISTORY

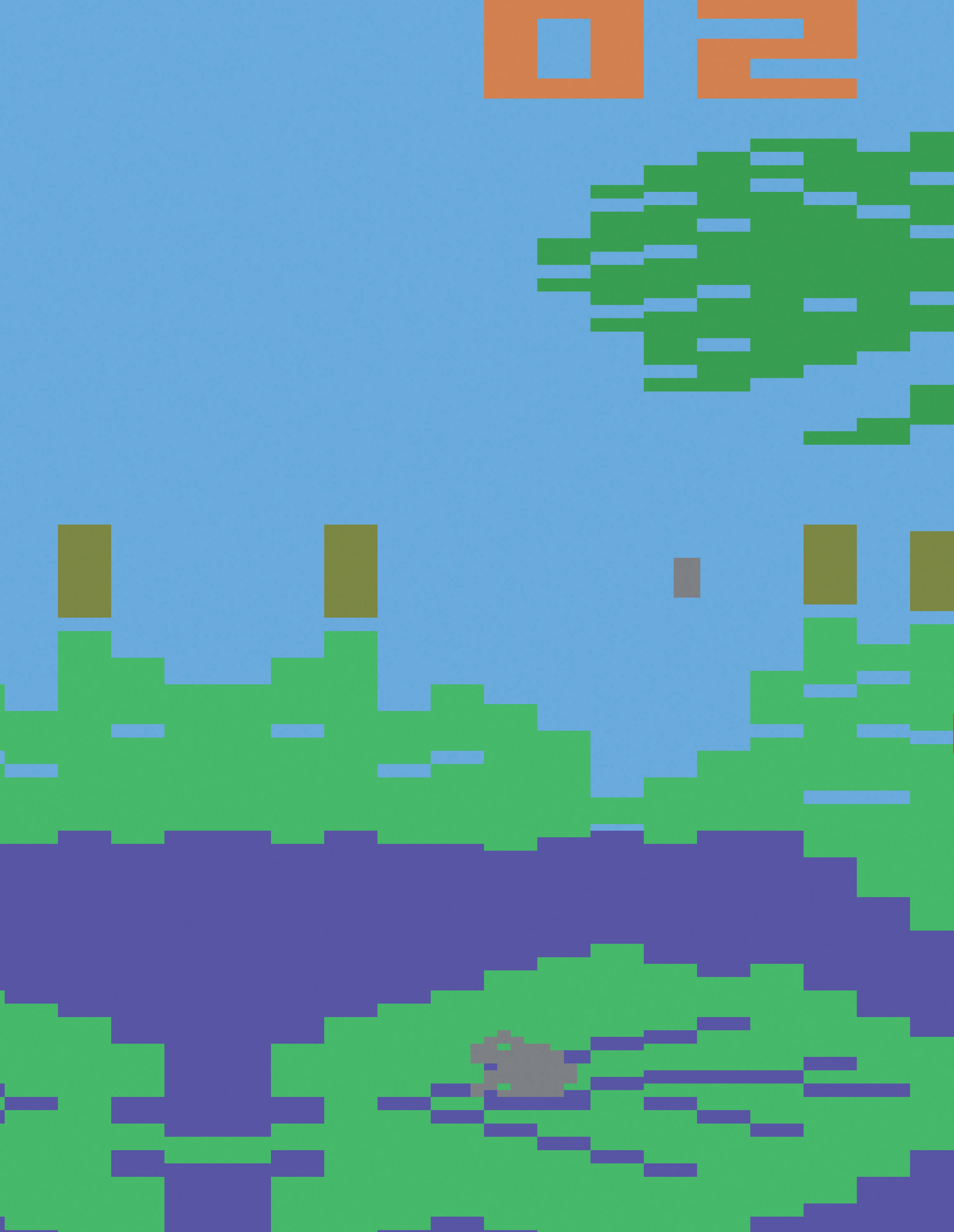
The great thing about the Atari 2600 is that if you look past all the more popular names, horrendous conversions, and Activision titles you'll still find plenty of gems. *Frog And Flies* is one such release, and while it's not an original game for the machine – it first appeared on the rival Intellivision – its actual gameplay is refreshingly unique.

Taking control of a tiny frog, you're required to do nothing more than leap majestically through the air and catch insects as they erratically fly by your hungry amphibian. While you're attempting to capture as many of the little buggers as possible, the computer or human opponent is attempting to do exactly the same. As a result, *Frog And Flies* becomes a desperate race against your rival as you frantically try and catch as many insects as possible. And you only have a limited amount of time, indicated by the screen slowly turning from day to night.

Initially it seems there's no control over your frog's trajectory, but by slightly holding the stick it's possible to change the angle of your frog's path so that he can get those out-of-reach flies that refuse to play ball. Of course, set the trajectory wrong and you'll either overshoot the lily pad or fail to reach it, wasting precious seconds as you swim back to dry land… all right, leaf. It's an amazingly simple concept, but like last month's *Combat*, it makes for some wonderfully frantic gaming sessions, especially when you're playing against a human opponent.

There's something really satisfying about snatching a fly from your mate and listening to him curse and swear like a trooper as his tiny frog swims back to its starting point. And we can only imagine how much fun this would be if it was resurrected on iPhone or a similar download service.

It's certainly not one of the most well-known Atari 2600 games, but if you're looking for something a little different, or just love frogs in general than track it down. You certainly won't be disappointed.


02

The Top 25 Dreamcast Games



With the Dreamcast celebrating its ten-year anniversary this year, and Darran's recent obsession of owning a complete PAL Dreamcast collection and documenting his progress on YouTube, we felt there was no better time than now to dust down our old Top 25 feature and reveal to you our top 25 Dreamcast games



Toy Commander

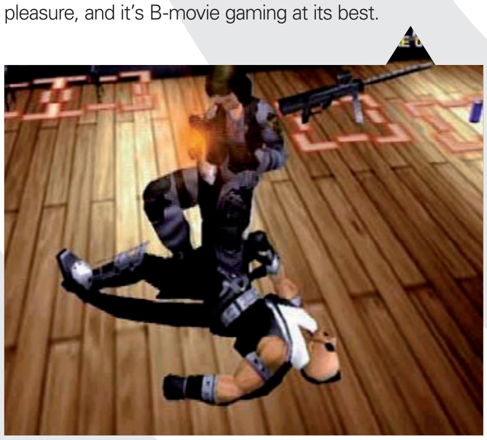
- **DEVELOPER:** NO CLICHÉ
- **YEAR RELEASED:** 1999
- **GENRE:** RACING

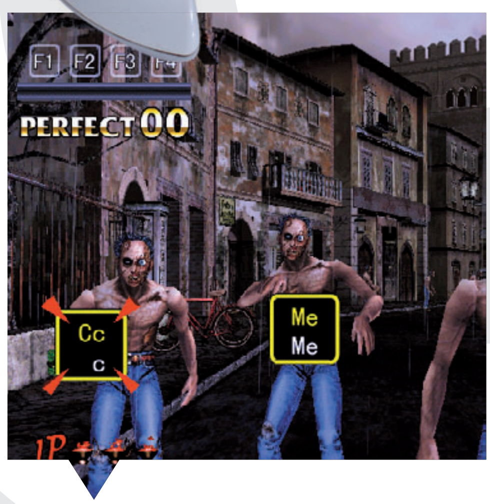
25 **An early release** for the DC, *Toy Commander*, in the tradition of films like *Toy Story* and games like the excellent *Clockwork Knight*, saw children's toys used in a weird racing combat game. A multitude of vehicular playthings could be driven into battle, from biplanes to jeeps and even tanks, and the missions all played out in various household environments too, à la *Micro Machines*, making for one quirky and fun little DC title.

Dynamite Cop

- **DEVELOPER:** AM1
- **YEAR RELEASED:** 1998
- **GENRE:** SCROLLING FIGHTER

24 **In terms of** outlandish beat-'em-ups, it doesn't get more peculiar than *Dynamite Cop*. The spiritual sequel to the arcade/Saturn hit *Die Hard Arcade*, DC's overblown slapstick/action gameplay quickly became one of the earliest must-owns for the machine. Set on a luxury cruise liner usurped by a band of 'modern day' pirates, it was your mission to rescue the President's daughter, who's travelling on the vessel, basically using whatever you could get your hands on, be it a fire extinguisher, anti-tank missiles or salt and pepper shakers. A guilty pleasure, and it's B-movie gaming at its best.





The Typing Of The Dead

- **DEVELOPER:** WOW ENTERTAINMENT/SMILEBIT
- **YEAR RELEASED:** 2000
- **GENRE:** PUZZLE

23 **The guy who** suggested playing *House Of The Dead 2* using a keyboard, and then suggested simply typing odd combinations of words like 'Santa has some sausages' instead of firing bullets was, in all honesty, a complete genius. This hilarious marriage of a gory arcade lightgun game with a secretary trainer remains one of the quirkiest experiences you can find on the DC, and is wholly worth forking out for the keyboard peripheral alone.



Virtua Tennis 2

■ **DEVELOPER:** HITMAKER
■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 2001 ■ **GENRE:** SPORTS

22 **Boasting the same** stunning gameplay and crisp animation that had served *Virtua Tennis* so well, Sega's sequel ramped things up further by offering a plethora of options. Female players swelled the list to 18 famous stars and the World Tour mode was significantly expanded, while the mini-games were crazier than ever. Along with *Power Stone 2* and *Chu Chu Rocket!*, it remains some of the best fun you can have with four players.



Confidential Mission

■ **DEVELOPER:** HITMAKER
■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 2001 ■ **GENRE:** LIGHTGUN

21 **Many believe that** *Virtua Cop* never found its way to the Dreamcast, but actually it did. *Confidential Mission* is Sega's inaugural 3D lightgun classic in every sense other than name… and the fact that it stars spies instead of cops. But apart from those two pretty significant points, the gameplay, the colour warning target system, the slightly more sedate look and feel to the action and the Justice Shot all remain present and accounted for. This remains one of the best arcade conversions to appear on the Dreamcast, as it actually improves on the arcade version by adding the all-new Agent Academy mode.

Sonic Adventure

■ **DEVELOPER:** SONIC TEAM
■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 1998 ■ **GENRE:** PLATFORMER

20 **It's fair to** say that *Sonic* and 3D don't really work. This, the best 3D *Sonic* game, is over a decade old now, and in 11 years Sega still can't quite get it right. *Sonic Adventure* was the first *Sonic* title to hit the DC and was a great game with exhilarating Sonic bits, interspersed with character-swapping sections, which, while not as good as the Blue Blur's sequences, were enjoyable enough in their own weird chat-to-someone-about-something way.



Le Mans 24 Hours

■ **DEVELOPER:** INFOGRAMES MELBOURNE HOUSE
■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 1999 ■ **GENRE:** RACING

19 **It was tempting** to pick any one of Sega's better-known racers for this list, but *Le Mans 24 Hours* is just so damned good. Not only does it still manage to look absolutely sensational – especially through a VGA monitor – but it remains the most in-depth and satisfying racer on Sega's machine. Like *Ferrari F355 Challenge* it's a proper sim, but don't let that put you off, as you'll be missing out on one of the Dreamcast's most exhilarating experiences.

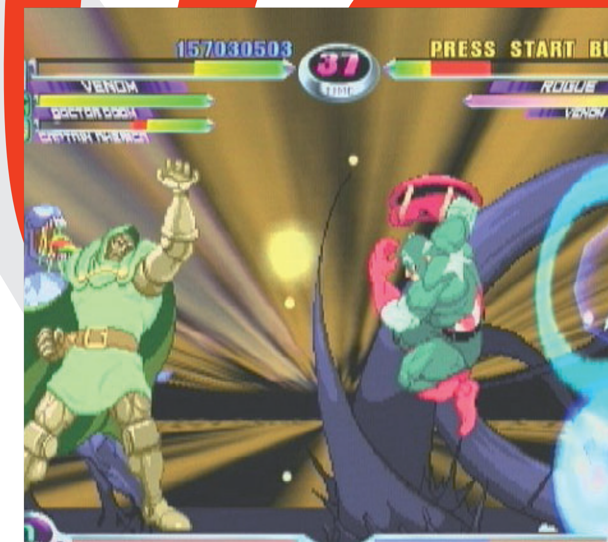


Space Channel 5

■ **DEVELOPER:** UNITED GAME ARTISTS
■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 1999 ■ **GENRE:** RHYTHM-ACTION

18 **With her shock** of pink hair, skintight clothing and sexy voice, *Space Channel 5*'s Ulala easily catapulted herself to the top of the sexiest videogame character list. Developed by Tetsuya Mizuguchi, who would later go on to helm both *Rez* and *Lumines*, it's a wonderful rhythm-action game that sees *Space Channel 5*'s top reporter facing off against the cute Morolians due to their desire for galactic conquest. Effectively nothing more than a musical version of Simon Says, *Space Channel 5* gets elevated to Dreamcast greatness thanks to its sexy female protagonist, brilliantly catchy tunes and the fact that, despite being ridiculously easy to complete, we still find ourselves constantly returning to it.





Marvel vs Capcom 2

■ **DEVELOPER:** CAPCOM
■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 2000 ■ **GENRE:** BEAT-'EM-UP

17 **The climatic smashing** together of two popular geek worlds – videogames and comic books – was always going to be a dream matchup, and with the quality of a developer like Capcom pulling the strings what *MVC2* represented was the most lavish and over-the-top beat-'em-up to ever find a release. With 56 characters, three-on-three fights, and screen-saturating special moves, it was an utter must for any DC collection.

Samba De Amigo

■ **DEVELOPER:** SONIC TEAM
■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 1999 ■ **GENRE:** RHYTHM-ACTION

16 **Ported from the** original arcade game, *Samba De Amigo* is further proof of just how original and innovative Sega's Dreamcast actually was. Played via a pair of funky maracas and sporting a superb selection of party songs, it's a brilliant rhythm-action title that was bolstered by garish visuals, utterly charming characters and plenty of downloadable content, including lots of arrangements of classic Sega arcade games. Nowadays it sells for well over £100, but to be honest it's worth every penny, especially if you've played the disappointing Wii version.



The Top 25 Dreamcast Games



Sega Marine Fishing

■ **DEVELOPER:** WOW ENTERTAINMENT
■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 1999 ■ **GENRE:** SPORTS

15 **After getting bored** of catching bass in Sega's first two Dreamcast fishing games, *Marine Fishing* proved itself to be a massive improvement. As well as enabling you to catch a huge variety of different fish, an additional game mode rewarded you with a variety of items and fish that could be used to stock a huge aquarium. Add in a host of excellent mini-games and *Marine Fishing* becomes the best fishing game on any system.

Power Stone 2

■ **DEVELOPER:** CAPCOM
■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 2000 ■ **GENRE:** BEAT-'EM-UP

14 **While you could** argue that the one-on-one gameplay of *Power Stone* makes for a better-balanced game, it can't hold a candle to the sheer chaos that takes place in the sequel. A real friend destroyer, sit down with three pals and watch the sparks fly. Even if *Power Stone 2* didn't feature one of the best multiplayer modes, we'd still fall in love with it thanks to its impossibly vibrant visuals, great levels and huge number of weapons to unleash on your hapless opponents. Simply unmissable.



Chu Chu Rocket!

■ **DEVELOPER:** SONIC TEAM
■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 1998 ■ **GENRE:** PLATFORMER

13 ***Chu Chu Rocket!*** was to the DC what *Tetris* was to the Game Boy. The first online console game for the machine, and given away free to lucky Europeans who signed up and ordered it via Dreamarena, it was a frantic puzzle game by Sonic Team that found the player helping mice avoid cats and escape on a spaceship.

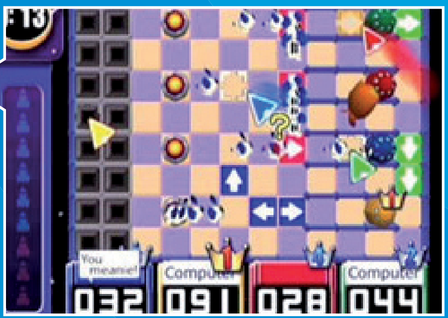
Metropolis Street Racer

■ **DEVELOPER:** BIZARRE CREATIONS
■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 2000 ■ **GENRE:** RACING

12 **It's somewhat telling** that a decade after its release we're still waiting for a direct high-definition counterpart to this fantastic racer to appear. Amazingly ambitious and offering plenty of clever little touches – weather variations, the kudos system, the transition from night to day, radio stations – *Metropolis Street Racer* is easily the Dreamcast's best racer and is thoroughly deserving of all the high accolades that were bestowed on it back in the day. Now available for under a fiver, it's easily the DC's best non-arcade racer and is an essential part of any Dreamcast owner's collection.









Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike

■ **DEVELOPER:** CAPCOM
■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 1999 ■ **GENRE:** BEAT-'EM-UP

11 **With *Garou's* naff** loading times hurting its chances of making our prestigious list, Capcom's *3rd Strike* just manages to steal the 2D one-on-one fighter crown. Still incredible to look at some ten years after its release, it's a wonderful port that becomes even better when played with the DC's excellent arcade stick. With its instantly accessible but amazingly complex gameplay mechanics, exotic assortment of characters and wonderful parrying system, *3rd Strike* remains one of the best 2D fighters of all time.

Ikaruga

■ **DEVELOPER:** TREASURE
■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 2001 ■ **GENRE:** SHOOT-'EM-UP

10 **It would have** been all too easy to simply fill this top ten with shooters, but we've decided to plump for just one. As much a puzzle game as it is a shooter, *Ikaruga* takes the polarity ideas that Treasure first explored in *Silhouette Mirage* and evolves them into a far more complex and exciting mechanic. Notable for being the first of many games to get released after the DC's commercial death, it's a beautifully arresting game that features a perfectly pitched difficulty level, inventive level design and an array of fantastic bosses. Utterly essential.



Resident Evil: Code Veronica

■ **DEVELOPER:** NEXTECH
■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 2000 ■ **GENRE:** SURVIVAL HORROR

9 **It's weird to** think that one of the best *Resident Evil* games in the series never actually came from Capcom, but instead from a little-known freelancing development outfit called Nextech. Formerly Gau Entertainment, which was responsible for the awesome *Ranger X* on the Mega Drive, it's no wonder the game is the most cinematic and epic-feeling instalment of the series to date. *CV* was the first instalment to use proper 3D backgrounds instead of pre-rendered images, meaning real-time interaction with objects and a dynamic camera, and to add a first-person mode, leading the way for *Resident Evil 4* in many ways, a title that most regard as the pinnacle of the series.



Jet Set Radio

- **DEVELOPER:** SMILEBIT
- **YEAR RELEASED:** 2000 ■ **GENRE:** PLATFORMER

8 ***Jet Set Radio*** basically had three things to help it stand out from the crowd: J-pop, unique – for its day – cel-shaded graphics, and some unusual gameplay. Playing the leader of a colourful gang of rollerskating graffiti artists, the game involved skating through three levels set around Tokyo and battling with various gangs who are trying to seize control of their turf. To keep these gangs at bay, rather then waiting for them down dark alleys with shanks and chains, you skated around, avoiding cops and gang members as you tagged and re-tagged the streets with your gang motif as if competing in some kind of *It's A Knockout*-style event for urban street artists.

Phantasy Star Online

- **DEVELOPER:** SONIC TEAM
- **YEAR RELEASED:** 2000 ■ **GENRE:** RPG

7 **Sega and Sonic** Team broke many boundaries with the innovative *Phantasy Star Online*, and also saddled loyal followers of the cult game with insane telephone bills. Before various cheat devices ruined it, exploring *PSO*'s huge worlds with three friends was one of the most unique gaming experiences that Sega's machine offered. There's something about facing off against that huge dragon before realising that you're out of Scape Dolls that those who weren't there from the beginning just won't understand. Trust us, though: it was amazing.

Crazy Taxi

- **DEVELOPER:** HITMAKER
- **YEAR RELEASED:** 2000 ■ **GENRE:** RACING

6 ***Crazy Taxi* certainly** lived up to its name: you drove a taxi and the game was crazy. Insane, in fact. You basically played one of four idiot taxi drivers who act like their life depends on ferrying people to places like KFC and the FILA Store in milliseconds. Anyway, the game was great fun in the arcade, and the arcade-perfect conversion that cropped up on the DC a year later in 2000, replete with an extra city to tear around and Crazy Box mini-games, made for essential DC gaming. It was also one of the most successful releases to ever appear on the machine.



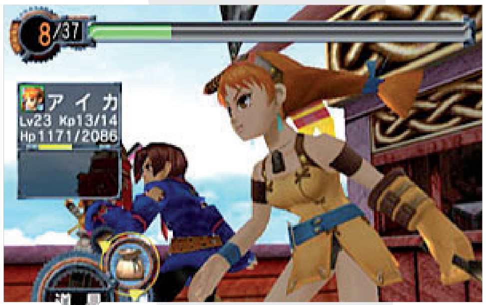


Soul Calibur

- **DEVELOPER:** NAMCO
- **YEAR RELEASED:** 1999 ■ **GENRE:** BEAT-'EM-UP

5 **A faultless arcade** conversion, *Soul Calibur* was the killer app for Sega's Dreamcast, dethroning even the majesty of its arcade rival *Virtua Fighter*. Featuring visuals that were actually significantly better than the original arcade game, *Soul Calibur* was as perfect a beat-'em-up as you could ask for. Slick, smooth visuals, and great playability that was bolstered by a great cast of varied and surprisingly balanced characters, plus a bevy of bonuses including extra modes and unlockables, made it the must-own fighter for the machine. It still holds up today, and the series has arguably never reached such heights since.





Skies Of Arcadia

- **DEVELOPER:** OVERWORKS
- **YEAR RELEASED:** 2000 ■ **GENRE:** RPG

4 **We've lost count** of the hours poured into this beautiful creation from Overworks, but it's well over 100 hours now. Filled with whimsical and often fantastical imagery – the flying pirate ships still amaze – unforgettable characters and an extraordinarily good story that sees a young boy and his friends facing off against gigantic elemental Gigas, *Skies Of Arcadia* has everything you'd expect from a classic RPG. Modeled on the later *Zelda* games, its engaging storyline, extensive use of the DC's VMU and fantastic visuals make it one of the best RPGs of the last decade.



Rez

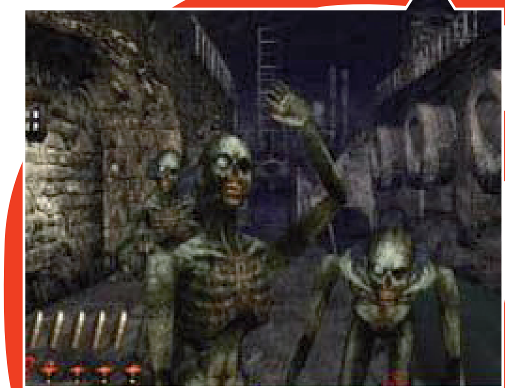
- **DEVELOPER:** UNITED GAME ARTISTS
- **YEAR RELEASED:** 2001 ■ **GENRE:** SHOOT-'EM-UP

3 ***Rez* is one** of the most unique rhythm-action games around, if only because it's far different to anything that's come before or since. With its dreamlike visuals, amazing trance music that slowly builds up in layers as you complete segments of each stage, and simplistic yet challenging gameplay, *Rez* is quite unlike anything else on Sega's system. A simple on-rails shooter at heart, *Rez* nevertheless possesses plenty of challenge under its gorgeous exterior and once again proves just how fertile and imaginative the minds at Sega Japan once were.

The House Of The Dead 2

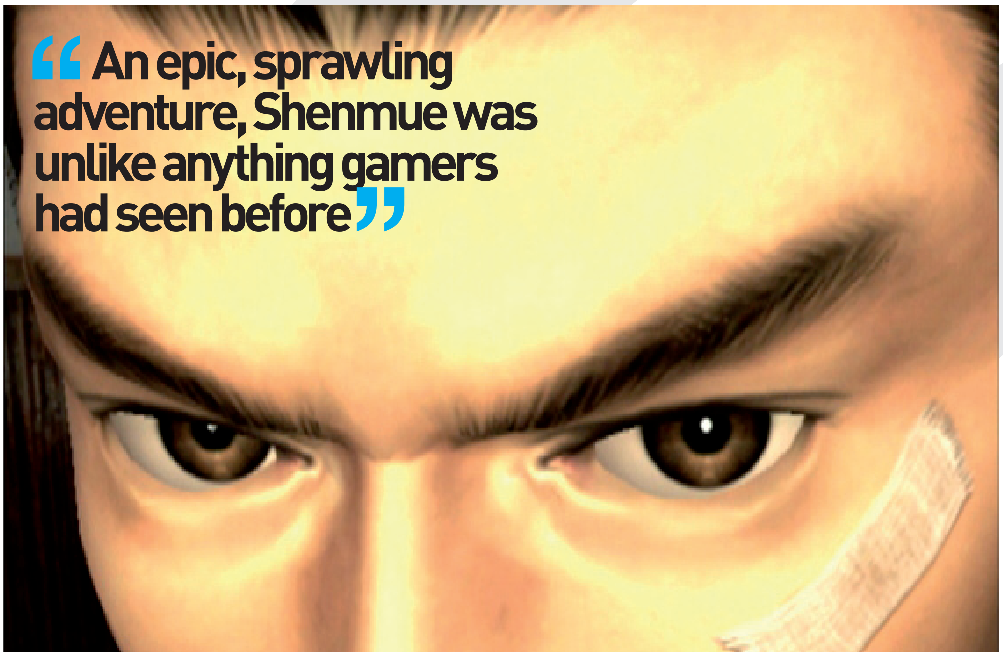
- **DEVELOPER:** WOW ENTERTAINMENT
- **YEAR RELEASED:** 1999 ■ **GENRE:** LIGHTGUN

2 **To this day,** *The House Of The Dead 2* remains the best lightgun game to sprint its way from the arcades and into our warm, cosy homes. The chasm of visual finesse and quality that existed between the first two instalments of Sega's survival-horror series was so large that you couldn't help but fall into its impressiveness. Sega really did pull out all the stops for this sequel, turning round an astonishingly faithful DC conversion in just six months, which boasted an all-new 'original mode' that added weapon and health upgrades hidden around the levels and rewarded subsequent playthroughs.





The Top 25 Dreamcast Games



> "An epic, sprawling adventure, Shenmue was unlike anything gamers had seen before"

Shenmue I and II

■ **DEVELOPER:** SEGA-AM2 ■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 1999, 2001 ■ **GENRE:** ADVENTURE

1 **Seriously, did you** really think it was going to be anything else? *Shenmue* was the game that the Dreamcast was building up to; a game it's likely the Dreamcast was built for, and the one game to really turn Sega's fortune… well, not quite. *Shenmue* was originally scheduled to appear on the Sega Saturn before its development was carried across to Sega's 128-bit beast.

The first shots of *Shenmue*, then titled *Project Berkeley*, started appearing in issues of *Sega Saturn Magazine*, along with the rumour that Yu Suzuki and his AM2 team were working on an RPG tied in to the *Virtua Fighter* universe and putting Akira in the central role, but the game never materialised. However, on a brand new console, under a new name and with a new story, *Berkeley* became the beautiful butterfly that was *Shenmue*. An epic, sprawling adventure game that harked back to the classic revenge martial arts flicks of the Eighties and dripped in Sega-isms – such as *Virtua Fighter*-style combat; a loose, arcade-style approach to RPG gaming; and a beautifully realised world that brilliantly mixed Eastern and Western tastes – it was unlike anything gamers had seen before.

At $70 million to develop, *Shenmue* is one of the most expensive games ever created, an achievement that has earned it a place in the *Guinness Book Of World Records*. Similarly, it is also the most ambitious, with Suzuki's plan to split *Shenmue* across 16 chapters over 4-5 games. This unique episodic nature of the game has meant that because of high production costs and less than favourable sales, the game has become a bit of an unfinished symphony and a bone of contention among scores of passionate *Shenmue* fans who are eager to find out how Ryo's story ends.



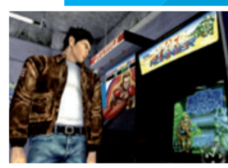
Predictably, given the large bubble of hype that was surrounding the game, many felt that *Shenmue* failed to live up to its promises. And while it's true that the game has its faults, there really was nothing else like it. An admittedly slow burn to begin with, the true brilliance of *Shenmue* opens up when you venture outside your home and really start to become enmeshed in the story, the characters and the beautifully constructed city of Yokosuka.

Two years later and Yu Suzuki treated the Dreamcast to the next instalment in the series. Featuring three chapters of the story – *Shenmue* only featured one – *Shenmue II* was bigger, more lavish and more epic than the first, but once again, because the game saw only moderate success, it was then that Sega pulled the plug on the Dreamcast and with it the potential future of the series.

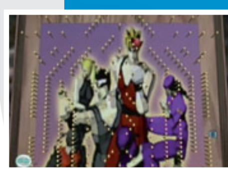
Five reasons why we love Shenmue



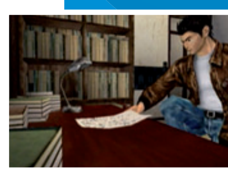
1 Great scenes
In one of *Shenmue*'s most poignant moments, Ryo says goodbye to his Rastafarian hot-dog selling pal, who's leaving him in his time of need to go travelling in America. Cheers, then. Oddly, the goodbye bit and subsequent wave to Tom as he's riding out of Yokosuka on a metal bird happen in the same place, in the exact same cut-scene. Weird.



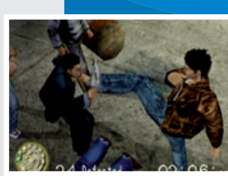
2 Arcade games
If there's one thing *Shenmue* is, it's retro. The game is set in the Eighties, people dress in clothes that you can only buy now in charity shops, and the arcade parlour in the first town of the game features plenty of treasures and classic arcade games, including full versions of *Hang-On* and *Space Harrier*.



3 Lucky Hit
If you fancy earning yourself a quick yen to buy yourself a capsule toy of Dural then you can always have a punt on *Shenmue*'s addictive carnival-style mini-game. The game involves dropping a ball down a board littered with pins, and winning rests on the ball dropping into a win zone.



4 The story
The compelling story of *Shenmue* is what has fans so eager to find out exactly how Ryo's adventure ends. What starts off as a simple tale of vengeance after Ryo's dad is murdered by a mysterious assailant soon spirals into an epic and mystical adventure involving ancient mirrors, kung fu mysticism, destiny and a magical tree.



5 Battle royale
The combat in *Shenmue* was obviously inspired by *Virtua Fighter*, and early on in *Shenmue*'s development both series were entwined. *Shenmue*'s combat is excellent, and Ryo learns to expand his move set during the course of the game, culminating in an epic 70-man rumble.

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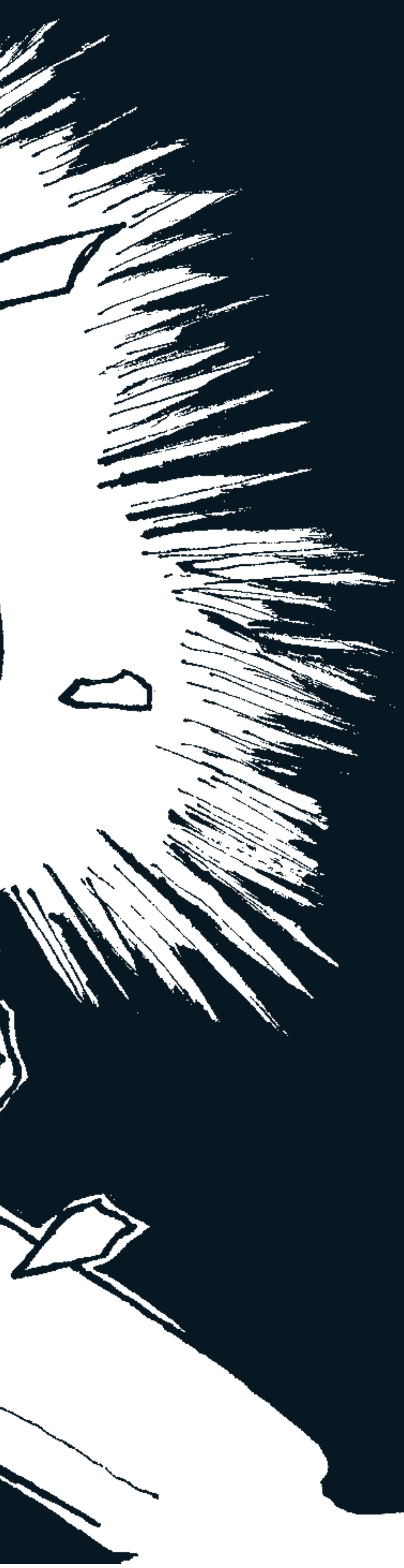
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THE MAKING OF...

A STUNNING PLATFORMER CUM BEAT-'EM-UP CUM ADVENTURE GAME; LIKE A SWISS ARMY KNIFE, SWITCHBLADE WAS MANY THINGS IN ONE RAZOR-SHARP PACKAGE. STUART HUNT SPEAKS TO SIMON PHIPPS, THE CREATOR OF THIS MULTIFACETED ATARI ST CLASSIC

SWITCHBLADE





When a school friend invited Simon Phipps to play on a rudimentary-looking *Space Invaders* clone he had running on his ZX81 hobby kit, Simon, a keen artist who was fascinated with cartoons and animation at the time, saw all the motivation he needed to purchase a BBC Model A and teach himself how to make games. The first game Simon wrote was *Jet Power Jack* for his BBC, a game inspired by Ultimate's Spectrum classic *Jetpac*. And when a friend of Simon's, Stu Gregg – who later went on to program a number of computer titles, including *Rick Dangerous* for the C64 – saw the game and suggested it was good enough to publish, Simon posted it to various publishers and eventually got a bite from Micro Power in Leeds.

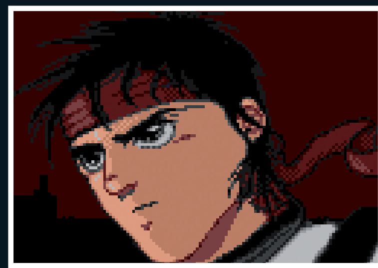
Over the next few years, Simon continued to dabble in game programming while studying for his A-levels and working Saturdays in a computer shop, which is where he met fellow Gremlin/Core artist Terry Lloyd (*Bounder, Future Knight*). After finishing college, Simon left his part-time job and began a career as a programmer in the field of desktop publishing, but that all changed when Terry got back in touch with Simon and presented him with an offer he couldn't refuse.

"Terry had started working for Gremlin, and the guys at Gremlin's Derby offices were working on *Masters Of The Universe: The Movie* and wanted someone freelance to help out with the graphics. I had an Atari ST, so I quickly threw together some mock-up screens in Degas Elite and popped by the office to show them what I could do. Well, I met them, and instead of a freelance post they offered me a full-time job. Although I'd poked around with bits of coding on machines post-BBC Micro, I'd never gained much ground. But being in the Derby office with the old Gremlin crew – inspiring guys like Dave Pridmore, Chris Shrigley, Andy Green and Stu Gregg – I got to understand the necessary bits of set-up code you needed to switch off all the operating system crud on the Amiga and ST so you could just get on and program. So, that's how I started coding properly, in earnest, on the Atari ST."



» Simon also worked on *Rick Dangerous, Wolfchild* and *Shadow Man: 2econd Coming.*

So Simon started work full-time as an artist for Gremlin while continuing to teach himself how to program in his spare time. It was during these self-schooling sessions that *Switchblade* started to take shape. What began as a bunch of demos, graphic routines and



» [ST]*Switchblade*'s artwork is the clearest indication of the game's anime influences.

utilities by way of Simon messing around with bits of code would later form the foundations for the game. Similarly, Simon's decision to write *Switchblade* on the ST was for the reason that it happened to be the machine he owned at the time. It was handy, then, that for an inexperienced programmer it proved a relatively straightforward system to write for.

"The Atari was basically a big, dumb hunk of memory, so unless you did something really stupid, you had tons and tons of space to fill. [The ST] proved pretty easy to code in the end – just about 12 lines of code to switch off the operating system and then it was a massive hunk of memory that I could play around with. The lack of any kind of hardware meant that I didn't spend any time being baffled by those hideous technical manuals, and the 68000 was a breeze to code. I'd previously fought 6502s and Z80s. My new processor had a multiply instruction! I was sorted!" Simon explains.

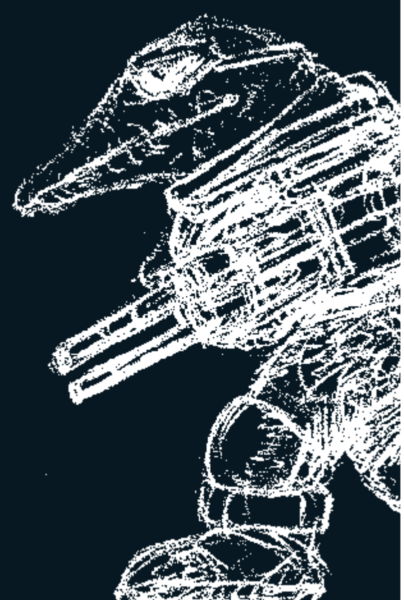
No sooner had Simon started work on *Switchblade* then a potential disaster struck. Gremlin would take the decision to close its Derby offices, which would leave Simon and Terry out of a job. But opting to take voluntary redundancy, and leaving on good terms with their former employer, the pair was quickly approached by Gremlin's former sales manager, Jeremy Smith, to work for Core Design – a company established by former Gremlin employees. It was while brainstorming potential game ideas for Core that Simon and Terry stumbled on the idea for *Rick Dangerous* (you can read our exclusive making of in issue 46). It was a game proposal that Core saw potential in and so immediately set Simon to work on the game as designer/programmer.

"So, there I am, writing *Rick Dangerous* – a full-on title during the day – and still finding spare time to continue my little *Switchblade* project



IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** GREMLIN GRAPHICS
- » **DEVELOPER:** CORE DESIGN
- » **PLATFORM:** ST, CPC, SPECTRUM AND C64
- » **RELEASED:** 1989
- » **GENRE:** ACTION/PLATFORMER
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** A FEW QUID



DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

TOMB RAIDER
SYSTEM: PLAYSTATION, SATURN, PC
YEAR: 1996

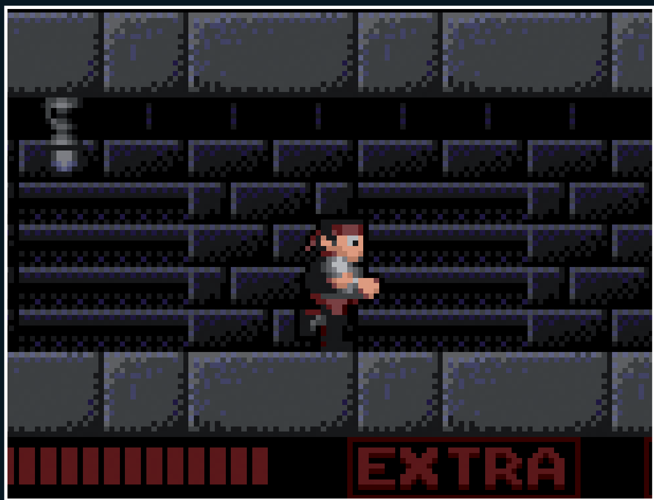
CHUCK ROCK
SYSTEM: VARIOUS
YEAR: 1991

BUBBA 'N' STIX (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: AMIGA, CD32, MEGA DRIVE
YEAR: 1994



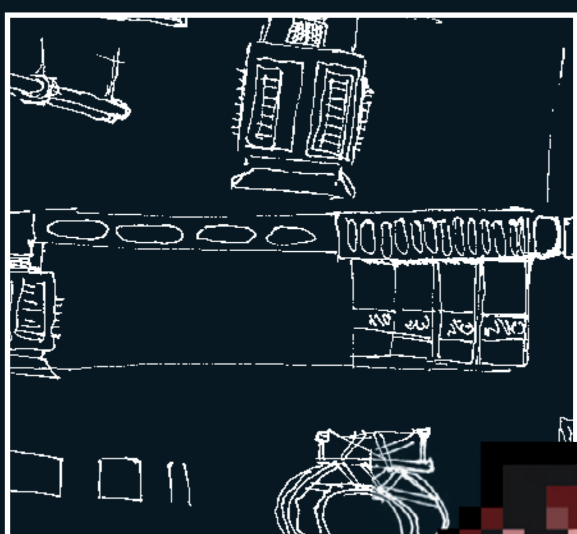
THE MAKING OF... SWITCHBLADE



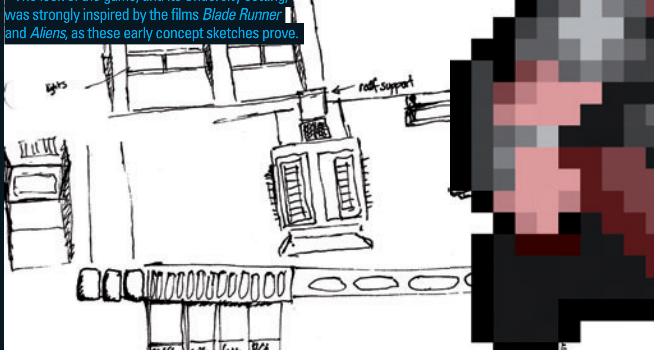


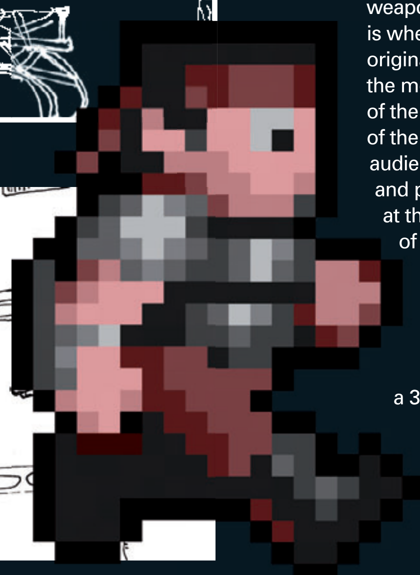
JACKA-KNIFE-ORY

SWITCHBLADE'S STORY centred on the tale of Hiro, the last ninja in a clan called the Blade Knights. When a powerful peace-emanating weapon known as the Fireblade is smashed into 16 smithereens by an evil firebrand called Havok, it casts the entire city into disrepair. It then falls to Hiro to reclaim the pieces of the sword by negotiating the cavernous Undercity, tape them back together and finally put a stop to the evil ne'er-do-well. That is until he pops up again in *Switchblade II*, at least.



» The look of the game, and its Undercity setting, was strongly inspired by the films *Blade Runner* and *Aliens*, as these early concept sketches prove.





> "I was writing Rick Dangerous during the day and working on Switchblade in my spare time"

in the background. Ironically, I'd written and seen published *Rick Dangerous* and other titles before I finished *Switchblade*, so while during my work hours I was writing elegant, well-constructed code with sophisticated routines and scrolling on the Atari, I was spending my evenings with my head buried in the spaghetti code of a novice programmer in *Switchblade*," he muses.

With work recommencing on *Switchblade* in his spare time, Simon began refining it into the type of game he wanted it to be and once again looked to Ultimate games for inspiration. This time his muse was the company's *Underwurlde*, for its clever genre blend of platform, action and adventure.

"I'd always wanted to make a game that was as big and expansive as Ultimate's *Underwurlde* for the Spectrum. That, out of all their games of that era, really hooked me – I just loved the fact that you seemed to be able to keep going for hours and you had loads of choice about where you could go, and that you could backtrack. So I wanted to make one of those, and, when I started – especially on a hard-to-side-scroll Atari – a flick-screen adventure on that scale appealed."

As well as being an excellently crafted and epic-feeling game, *Underwurlde* also featured a memorable and popular hero in the form of intrepid explorer Sabreman. This was something that didn't go unnoticed by Simon, who had a memorable hero of his own. A futuristic ninja character with interchangeable weapons, which Simon tells us is where the name *Switchblade* originated from, Hiro was one of the most memorable elements of the game. He looked untypical of the type of heroes Western audiences were used to seeing and playing in computer games at the time, but that was part of his charm.

"I'd been twiddling around in OCP Art Studio and made an attempt at a realistic hero-type character in a 32x32 pixel block and discovered two things. One: at the time I didn't have the experience to carry off realistically proportioned sprites – or, at least, ones I was happy with; and two: the relative width of such a character was really unappealing – I basically had a thin stick man in the middle of this huge empty sprite block. Anyway, I kept on fiddling about and thickened up the proportions and tried the same design but gave the character cartoon eyes – that *Wonder Boy In Monster Land* or *Alex Kidd* look – and the little guy appeared like that."

But it wasn't just Hiro that was inspired by Simon's love for animation. *Switchblade* was full of wonderful little nods to post-apocalyptic cinema, Japanese animation and literature. Simon cites his main sources of inspiration being the manga *Akira*, his passion for arcade and console games and the television shows *Battle Of The Planets* and *Marine Boy*, which he enjoyed watching as a kid. More specifically, he found game ideas from films like *Mad Max*, *Aliens* and *Blade Runner*, as well as the intro to David Bowie's *Diamond Dogs* album and William S Burroughs' novella *Cities Of The Red Night*. The latter was a big influence on Simon's art, even now. "The Burroughs book is definitely where the red sky came from," Simon explains.

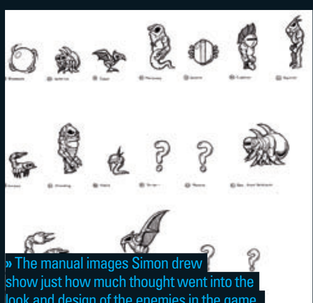
With both *Rick Dangerous* and *Switchblade* being worked on in tandem, it's no surprise that the games would come to feel incredibly similar. So considering the strong similarities that exist between the two games, we wondered whether Simon ever considered turning *Switchblade* into a futuristic spin-off to the established *Rick Dangerous* series.

"This was the spare time project that enabled me to make *Rick* happen, so in it, although it came out after *Rick*, is the embryonic Mr Dangerous through-and-through. The big differences for me between *Switchblade* and *Rick* were that *Switchblade*, being a hobby project, could become much more of a personal exploration of themes and styles, so I'd never considered turning it into *Rick* at all. I was wanting to play around with ideas and themes that were darker than the slapstick *Rick* allowed. The other thing for me was that *Switchblade* was about the exploration of a rich environment full of things to collect, stuff to shoot, things to discover – something that *Rick* was never intended to do."

While garnering plenty of fans, *Rick Dangerous*'s gameplay was criticised for containing too much trial and error,

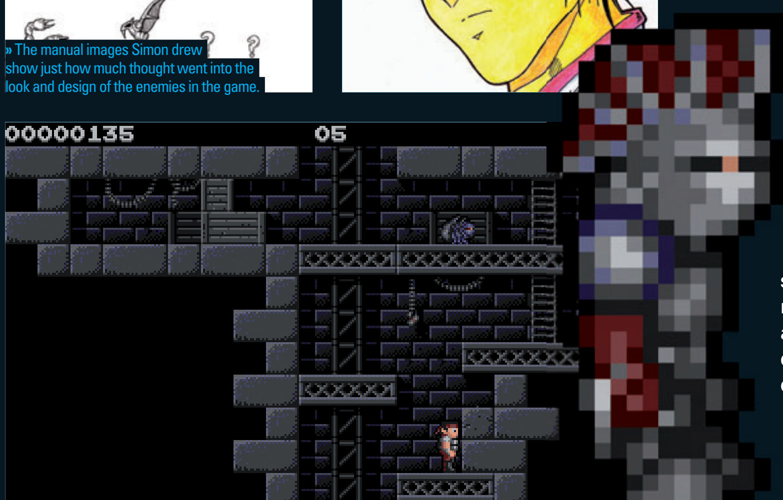
JACK OF ALL BLADES

IONE OF THE best elements of *Switchblade* was the central character Hiro, who had a surprising number of moves and abilities at his disposal. Firstly, Hiro has a cyber arm that could find and pick up a number of exchangeable blades and weapons to use against his foes. Second, he had a neat *R-Type*-style attack system whereby the player could hold the fire button down to perform three different types of attacks: a quick punch, high kick and, if held down long enough, a devastating wall-breaking sweep kick. "It was simply that I dug what *R-Type* did. I liked that, and I wanted loads of collectables and different weapons, so I just went ahead and took inspiration from it and came up with a system that worked for my game," reveals Simon.



» The manual images Simon drew show just how much thought went into the look and design of the enemies in the game.





which some people found too frustrating and marred their enjoyment of the game. Was redressing the balance with *Switchblade* something Simon was ever conscious of?

"I think most of us on the old *Rick* team have said in retrospective interviews that *Rick* was way too hard, and we had lots of heated discussions on the *Rick* team during development about what we now call 'game balancing' – back then it pretty much was, 'Well, I can do it,' and things went in. For *Switchblade* I wanted something more about exploration and collection – hence the health bar, life extensions and all that. But it wasn't a conscious decision to redress previous 'sins', if you like; it was just a different feel I was aiming for."

With 18 months and much spare time invested into the project, *Switchblade* was finally complete, leaving Simon the final task of finding a publisher for his game.

"Well, Jeremy put out his feelers for me and contacted our old boss Ian Stewart, who offered to publish it. In later years, Jeremy confessed that he wished that Core could have published it, but at the time the company just wasn't ready. So, that's how a game, started in my spare time at Gremlin, continued in my spare time while I was working at Core, got published by my old employer, with my then-current employer's blessing!"

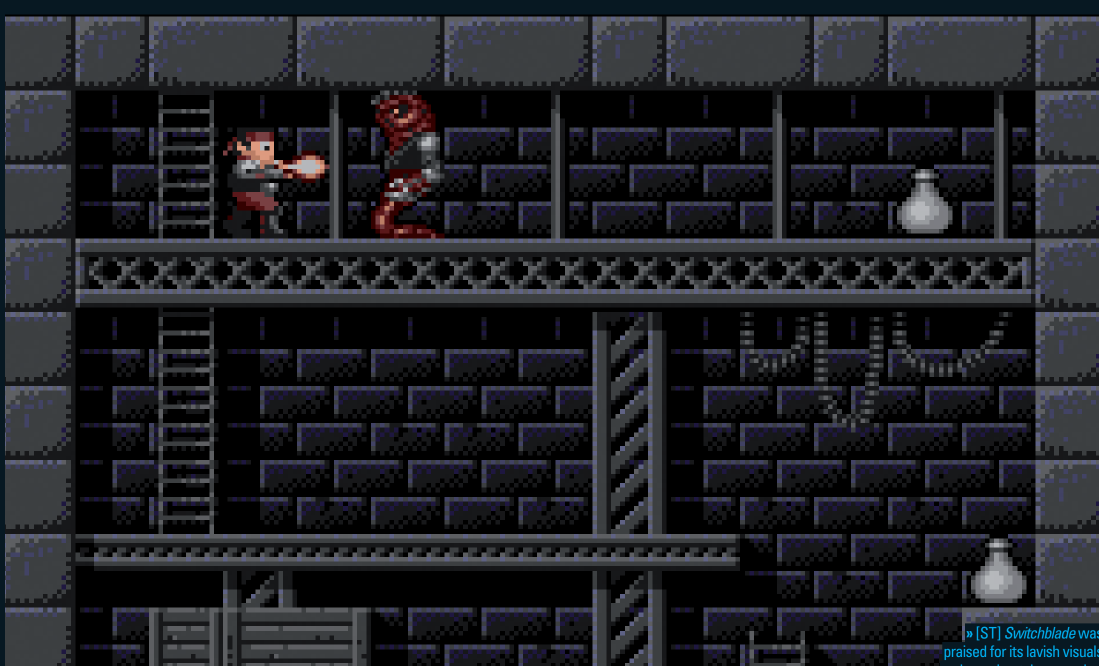
Switchblade was snapped up by Gremlin and released for the Atari ST in 1989. In the two years that followed, the game was ported to various 8-bit computers, with none of the conversions having Simon's direct involvement – save for him handing over all source art and map data and answering any questions the programmers had – but he's quick to praise the sterling job the programmers did to convert his game to 8-bit machines. "I had the luxury of all that time and memory. They had none of that," he acknowledges.

Following *Switchblade*'s success, Gremlin was understandably keen to capitalise on its popularity with a sequel. But at the point that the publisher announced it would be releasing a follow-up, Simon was working full-time at Core with his head firmly down in other projects. Simon's not irked by not being involved in the sequel, though, explaining to us that he felt that he'd achieved everything he wanted to with the original game and that returning to its world never really crossed his mind. But while Simon never returned to *Switchblade* officially, the game would undeniably have a lasting effect on his videogame career.

"The original game's spiritual successors are, to some extent, *Wolfchild*, which I worked on at Core on countless formats in the early Nineties and, later, *Shadow Man* for Acclaim – lots of multi-route exploration and heroes with unusual powers going into very dark places to achieve apotheosis… or something like that," he reveals.

Simon still works in the industry today and is currently working on a new project with Derby-based developer Eurocom. Knowing Simon was still involved in the process of making videogames, we had to ask whether he knew who currently owns the *Switchblade* licence and if he'd be pleased to see a new *Switchblade* title – or something similar – appear on current-gen machines.

"I've absolutely no idea! There's probably a piece of paper at the bottom of a cardboard box somewhere in a dusty storeroom in the middle of Sheffield along with a hundred other titles. But to answer your question about whether I'd like to see an update, I'd love to replay the old game for nostalgia's sake, but wouldn't be in a rush to see the original *Switchblade* released now for the modern audience. I mean, when you think about it, a lot of the guys playing Xbox and PS3 weren't even born when the original game came out. Now I do feel old!" he smiles.



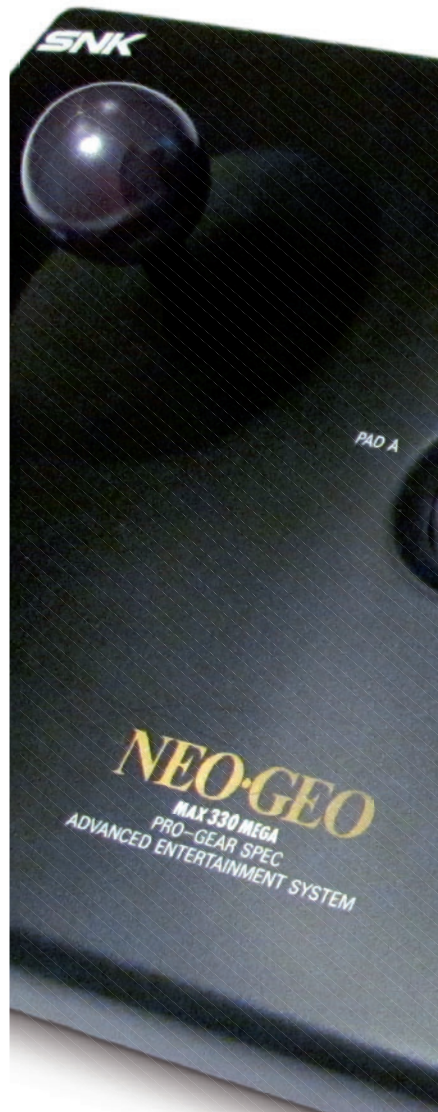
» [ST] *Switchblade* was praised for its lavish visuals and arcade-style gameplay.

Retro Gamer would like to offer thanks to Simon for kindly giving up his time to speak to us. If you would like to find out more about Simon and his games, visit his website at **www.simonphipps.com**.

NEO·GEO



SNK'S JET BLACK JUGGERNAUT LANDED IN 1991 WITH HUGE CARTRIDGES, BIGGER CONTROLLERS, AND A STRATOSPHERIC PRICE TAG. JOIN SNK FANBOY **JOHN THACKER** AS HE CHRONICLES THE HISTORY OF THE LONGEST-LIVED HOME CONSOLE EVER, AND THE FIRST TO BRING TRUE ARCADE PERFECTION INTO YOUR LIVING ROOM – IF YOU COULD AFFORD IT…



If you weren't around in 1991, you might know the Neo Geo as something of a mythical beast of the gaming world. You may have heard rumours of games that cost hundreds, maybe even thousands of dollars. Perhaps you have seen its massive arcade-style joystick controllers, or stumbled into a Neo Geo internet forum, only to have your head virtually chewed off by the regulars. Or, maybe you are one of the lucky ones who has actually played a Neo Geo, and has joined the thousands of fans worldwide who regard the system as the crown jewel of a bygone era in gaming. These unfortunate souls are doomed to live with the sad knowledge that there will never be another system quite like the Neo Geo ever again. What is so special about this system that it can inspire such fervour in its fans? Read on…

Before the days of Neo Geo, its creator, SNK – also known as Shin Nihon Kikaku, or 'New Japan Company' – was a moderately successful Japanese arcade game developer responsible for such titles as *Vanguard*, *Alpha Mission* and *Ikari Warriors*. Thanks to its success in the late Eighties in the arcades and with various NES ports, SNK decided to experiment with new, unconventional ideas for expanding its presence in the arcade market. One such idea would lead to the birth of the Neo Geo arcade hardware – MVS, or Multi Video System – and, subsequently, the Neo Geo home console, the AES.

In the late Eighties, most new arcade games came on a single large circuit board and were sold complete with dedicated cabinets, at a significant cost. Arcade operators who wanted to have the latest games had to invest considerable money and floor space while shouldering a great deal of risk as to whether their investment would actually pay off. SNK sought to change that with its new machine. The Neo Geo MVS was a single cabinet that could accommodate between one and six different titles in the same machine, depending on which model was purchased. Instead of new games being released as entire circuit boards containing the processing logic in addition to the game ROM, games would be sold as individual cartridges that contained only the game ROM data, leaving the logic integrated onto the MVS arcade board.

Luckily, SNK didn't skimp on the technical specs, and the MVS stood tall next to other arcade games of its era and proved to be extremely versatile as the years went on. The Neo Geo featured a fast 16-bit Motorola 68000 CPU, as well as a companion 8-bit Z80 CPU, hence the '24-bit' moniker. Multichannel stereo sound with digital audio capabilities was also integrated into the machine.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of the MVS, however, was its advanced graphics capabilities. The hardware allowed for 4,096 simultaneous colours on screen, a fact that SNK later touted in advertisements when advocating its technical superiority to the Sega Mega Drive and Super Nintendo. The Neo Geo was capable of displaying hundreds of massive, flicker-free sprites simultaneously, some of which could be larger than the entire screen. The cartridge format allowed the hardware to stream graphics from the game memory extremely rapidly, allowing for butter-smooth animation that would later prove a valuable asset for fighting games and pre-rendered 3D graphics.

That leads us to the home console counterpart to the MVS: the Neo Geo AES. It is important to remember that in the late Eighties and into the early Nineties, many of the most commercially successful console games were ports of the most popular arcade games of the time. High-quality arcade ports were viewed as system sellers. In



» Some 'dog tag'-style US-released Neo Geo cartridges, featuring the 'Bigger, Badder, Better' Neo Geo logo with the game title against a black background.

AES



> "Fans worldwide regard the Neo Geo AES as the crown jewel of a bygone era in gaming"

INSTANT EXPERT

- **SNK actively supported** the Neo Geo AES with new releases from 1991 through 2004, making it the longest-lived home videogame console in history.
- ***Puzzled*, aka *Joy Joy Kid*,** a launch title in Japan, was the smallest Neo Geo AES game, weighing in at just 22 megabits. The largest AES title was *The King Of Fighters 2003*, released in 2004, at 716 megabits.
- **Of the 148** Neo Geo MVS titles officially released in the arcade, 117 had an AES home cartridge release in Japan. Of those, 93 had an official English-language counterpart.
- **AES cartridges came** in three distinct types of packaging. The first-generation titles in Japan were released in easily damaged cardboard boxes. SNK quickly switched to a more durable, soft clamshell-type case, and eventually to a hard plastic snap case, beginning with the release of *Fatal Fury 3* in 1995 through the final release in 2004.
- **All Neo Geo** games use identical ROM chips in the cartridges, regardless of region or format (AES or MVS). As a result, the mode and language in which a Neo Geo game plays is entirely dependent on the format and region of the system playing it.
- **The Neo Geo** AES 'Gold System' was launched on 1 July 1991 in the United States and came with the console, two arcade-style joysticks, and *Magician Lord* as a pack-in. MSRP was $649.99. The average MSRP for individual launch titles was $199.99.
- **Four-player gameplay** was possible on the AES. Certain titles, such as *League Bowling*, had a small 1/8" linkup port in the top of the game cartridge, allowing gamers to sync with another console running the same game. Only three games ever made use of the feature.
- **Early MVS (arcade)** Neo Geo machines featured a memory card slot built in to the cabinet. That way, AES users with a memory card could continue games where they left off in the arcade.
- **At some point** in the development cycle, each Neo Geo title was assigned a unique three-digit 'NGH' number, found within the game code itself. Because there are holes in the otherwise sequential known list of NGH numbers, it is believed that there were many Neo Geo games developed that never saw official release.
- **'AES' is an** acronym for Advanced Entertainment System, another name for the Neo Geo home console. 'MVS' refers to the Neo Geo Multi Video System, the Neo Geo's arcade counterpart.

bringing arcade games home, game developers of the era were usually faced with the daunting task of reprogramming the games from the ground up for the less powerful home hardware, often with very mixed results. While some ports were able to capture the spirit of the arcade original, they were very rarely perfect, and purists were always quick to recognise omissions and compromises.

That was simply not good enough for SNK, and the idea of arcade perfection formed the foundation of the AES home console. SNK decided that its arcade MVS games would also be made for its AES home system, and the games would be indistinguishable from their arcade counterparts. Therefore, the AES was manufactured to be technically identical to the arcade hardware. In fact, AES games actually used the exact same ROM chips as the arcade cartridges, although the two cartridges were not interchangeable due to different pin connectors. Thus, gamers were guaranteed the same experience at home as they had in the arcade.



» As with most collectables, counterfeit items can be a problem. These two AES cartridges look harmless enough but actually contain altered, fan-made case inserts in place of the SNK originals. Buy with caution!

Shortly following the launch of the arcade hardware and after test-marketing the AES as a rental unit, SNK decided to sell the AES system worldwide and market directly to consumers. To assist in marketing the console in the US, SNK of America created a special position known as 'Game Lord'. This was a face gamers could associate with the system who would also be responsible for getting the word out to potential buyers. Longtime game industry veteran Chad Okada was selected for the task. "SNK originally created this position because the US branch was in need of a person who knew all the aspects of videogames," he recalls. "To market the product well, they needed to know the competition and they needed someone who knew videogames as a whole, from a strategic marketing standpoint and from a gamer standpoint."

As with many things in life, perfection came at a price. The prices of the machine and its games are almost legendary in the history of gaming. Due to the advanced technology involved, the system's price was unprecedented at the time of release. The Neo Geo Gold System, which included one game, launched in the US in 1991 at $649.99, with games averaging $199.99 each. The console itself had a sleek, elegant facade that was completely black, reinforcing its image as an 'elite' console. The game cartridges were larger than VCR tapes, had two edge connectors underneath, and were packed with expensive high-capacity ROM chips – and they also smelled of solder; a sure-fire way to tell a 'fresh' cartridge! To highlight its arcade roots, the system also included two large four-button arcade-style joysticks, each of which was almost as large as the system itself. At the time, the price of one AES cartridge was more than a brand new Sega Genesis console. More than one parent would lose sleep over the idea of keeping their kid happy with a fresh supply of games for this beastly unit.

Okada recognised the difficulties SNK faced in getting the console into gamers' hands, given the high price and retailers' reluctance to take a risk on the machine. "Early on, the strategy was to gain attention – not necessarily positive attention – and to market to a consumer that was older, richer, and could afford a premium-priced game system," he continues. "It was thought that we could only sell in places similar to a Sky Mall or Sharper Image. It was a difficult product to sell because of the price point."

As a result, SNK had to focus on the obvious technical superiority of the system while acknowledging the higher price tag. SNK had a very aggressive, adult-themed advertising campaign, and advertised in adult magazines in addition to the popular game magazines of the era. "It will always be known that SNK

» MVS to AES converters (two different models pictured) allow AES owners to play relatively cheap MVS games on their AES consoles in lieu of forking over hundreds of dollars for rare AES originals.



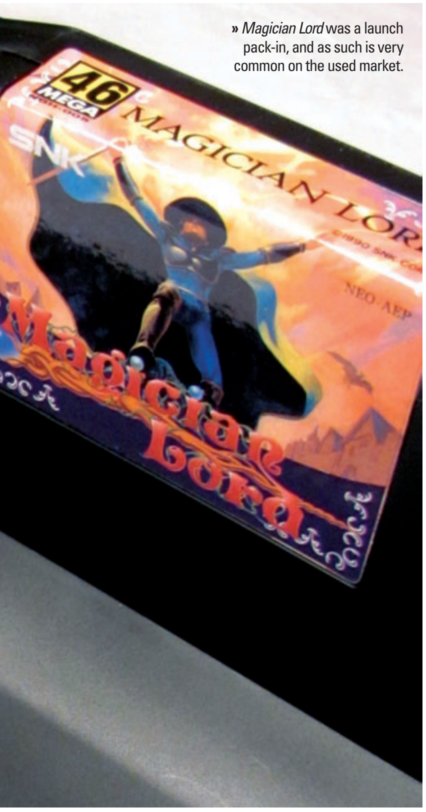




» The mascot of the 'Bigger, Badder, Better' marketing campaign violently breaks off his leash to gnaw through the controller of your wimpy non-Neo game system in this classic ad.







» *Magician Lord* was a launch pack-in, and as such is very common on the used market.

COMMUNITY THE BEST NEO GEO AES RESOURCES ON THE WEB

neo-geo.com

This should be the first stop for anyone with even a fleeting interest in the Neo Geo. Home to the infamous Neo Geo forums and its community of rabid fans, the site also features price guides, master game lists, game reviews, cartridge photos, collection galleries, and the Neo Store, where high-end Neo goods are regularly stocked from sources worldwide.



neogeoforlife.com

Kazuya_UK's Neo Geo reviews site has long been one of the finest Neo Geo fan sites on the 'net. Here you can find in-depth reviews for nearly every Neo Geo title, including ports to other consoles and even SNK-developed games for other platforms. The site is loaded with screenshots and is the best place to get the lowdown on whether a title is worth your time.



unibios.free.fr

The Universe BIOS, created by community legend Razoola, is a handy console modification that unlocks the full potential of the game cartridges in both AES and MVS units. Gamers can access debug modes, cheats, hidden game data, and even play the games based upon different hardware configurations. Think of it as a Game Genie for your Neo Geo! Essential.



ngdevteam.com

NG Dev Team marketed and released *Last Hope*, a homebrew shooter, on the Neo Geo in 2006. The cartridge was priced at $550 and was limited to 60 units produced. The fact that it sold out instantly is a testament to the dedication of Neo Geo fans and the continued interest in new releases. Who knows what the future holds for homebrew development?









» An exclusive photo of the two rarest and most valuable AES titles ever: English *Kizuna Encounter* and *The Ultimate 11*. Unlike most English AES titles, these are believed to have only been distributed in Europe and fetch thousands of dollars each in the rare event a copy surfaces for sale.

tried to convince consumers that the Neo Geo [AES] was exactly the same as the $4k machine in the arcades. And this was the truth," says Okada.

Fortunately for SNK, gamers quickly recognised the technical advances that the Neo represented. The AES launched alongside a host of software titles, and no popular genre was overlooked. There were action games (*Cyber-Lip*, *Magician Lord*, *The Super Spy*), sports games (*Top Player's Golf*, *Super Sidekicks*), shooters (*Ghost Pilots*, *Alpha Mission II*, *Last Resort*, *NAM-1975*), platformers (*Blue's Journey*), racers (*Thrash Rally*, *Riding Hero*), brawlers (*Burning Fight*, *Mutation Nation*), and even a pseudo-RPG known as *Crossed Swords* – obviously a difficult genre for the arcade. The vast majority of games all looked, sounded and played great, with many of the titles featuring high-quality speech that enhanced the home experience. Because many gamers had already played these titles in their local arcade, they salivated over the prospect of playing them at home.

"Gamers obviously went bonkers over it. They loved it. They all wanted it," recalls Okada about the launch. "When the Neo Geo was released, it was the most respected powerhouse game system out. It was a system that trounced everything out at the time and made everything else look like toys."

friends and foes alike in the genre-defining 2D brawler. Suddenly, the platformers and shooters of old weren't quite as interesting. A new type of game was in town.

Luckily for SNK, the Neo Geo hardware happened to be perfect for the 2D fighting genre, thanks to its advanced

> **"As gamers had played these titles in the arcade, they salivated over playing them at home"**

Nevertheless, retail sales for the machine continued to struggle. Then, suddenly, an event occurred that changed everything. 1991 saw the release of a little arcade title known as *Street Fighter II*, which, as everyone knows, shook the entire games industry to its core. Gamers packed arcades for their turn to go head to head against

graphics, high memory capacity and four-button controller layout, which was unusual in the era of JAMMA-based arcade boards, which traditionally used only three buttons. It turns out that SNK was developing a fighting title contemporaneously with Capcom's effort, which later became known as *Fatal Fury*. Despite having only three

selectable characters and an admittedly inferior game engine, gamers jumped at the opportunity to play a decent alternative to *Street Fighter II*. *Fatal Fury* introduced many of SNK's most enduring and beloved characters, such as Terry Bogard and Geese Howard, as well as unique gameplay mechanics, including two-player co-operative gameplay and the 'line change' system. Plus, it looked and sounded great for its time. The fighting game frenzy was so intense that SNK quickly began producing additional new fighting franchises, such as *World Heroes* and *Art Of Fighting*. The games were so successful in the arcade that SNK couldn't release new sequels fast enough – barely nine months separated the release of *Fatal Fury 2* and *Fatal Fury Special* in 1993, for example.

In 1993, SNK released *Samurai Shodown*, a bloody weapons-based fighter set in feudal Japan. This incredible game proved that SNK was willing and able to challenge genre conventions and go toe to toe with Capcom in the fighting

game arena. The heated competition between the two companies would last through the decade and beyond as both companies tried to out-innovate each other with each new fighting game release. SNK's hugely successful *King Of Fighters* franchise, launched in 1994 and subsequently released in annual instalments through 2003, always went head to head with the hottest Capcom fighters of the day and remains a tournament favourite in Japan. Those who could afford the AES home console truly had access to cutting-edge titles, and this back-and-forth competition explains why almost half of all Neo Geo AES games are 2D fighters.

Thanks largely to the fighting genre and its cheap, modular cartridge-based design, the Neo Geo MVS was highly successful in establishing a foothold in arcades worldwide. Unfortunately, sales of the AES never really took off, and by the mid-Nineties the system had practically vanished from store shelves. "Even with the amount of marketing we had out for the Neo Geo at the time, we couldn't get the product into big name chains," remembers Okada about the console's failure to break into the home market. Thus, AES fans were forced to source new releases from specialist game shops that could afford to advertise in game magazines, or directly from SNK via mail order. To make matters worse, the cost of new cartridges was slowly rising, and the media was beginning to give up on the console. SNK officially halted production of new Neo Geo AES consoles in Japan in 1996, although game production continued.

Ironically, it is during this time that the Neo Geo saw some of its most important releases. *Metal Slug*, developed by Nazca, was released in 1996 and gradually grew to be one of the Neo Geo's most beloved and enduring franchises. The game took the *Contra* formula and added smooth, cartoony animation, awesome music with voice effects, and a variety of outrageous weapons. The game spawned five sequels on the Neo hardware alone, and the series has been ported to nearly every system, from the Sega Saturn to the Xbox 360. *Bust-A-Move*, also known as *Puzzle Bobble*, is one of the most well-known and oft-imitated puzzle games outside *Tetris*, and has become a staple of arcades worldwide – although, for some inexplicable reason, this title never saw an official AES release.



» The first AES title, *NAM-1975* (NGH-001), released to retail on 1 July 1991, next to the final AES title, *Samurai Shodown V Special* (NGH-270), released 9 July 2004.

The failure of the AES at retail did nothing to stop SNK from developing new Neo Geo games, because the MVS continued to thrive. And, because AES and MVS cartridges were produced in the same factories in Japan, SNK was able to easily produce AES versions of the latest arcade releases at minimal cost to satisfy the small legion of loyal fans that remained. This explains the longevity of the AES system: despite the fact that the system failed at dethroning Sega or Nintendo, the success of the MVS system meant there was little risk to SNK in releasing limited quantities on the AES format.

As it turns out, quantities in some cases were extremely limited. It is estimated that, outside of Japanese releases and popular *King Of Fighters* and *Metal Slug* entries, many post-1995 titles were produced in quantities numbering in the low hundreds. For example, the AES version of *Metal Slug*, despite being one of the Neo's most successful arcade releases, is one of the most valuable videogames ever, commanding up to $3,000 for a complete, authentic English cartridge. The rarest games are believed to be the English releases of *Kizuna Encounter* and *The Ultimate 11*, with only a handful of copies surfacing over the years. The price of other rare AES cartridges began dramatically increasing and hasn't stopped since, making the AES one of the most collectable videogame systems



» SNK traditionally distributed flyers to arcade operators to promote the newest MVS releases. Toward the end, many were included as bonuses with new AES cartridge purchases.



Samurai Shodown V Special: Neo Geo's final bow, complete with controversy

■ THE FINAL NEO Geo AES title, *Samurai Shodown V Special* (known as *Samurai Spirits Zero Special* in Japan), was released worldwide on 9 July 2004 at a retail price of ¥39,800 ($359.99 in the US). Fans had clamoured for the release after seeing videos and screenshots revealing all-new violent fatalities for each of the beloved characters. When the AES cartridge finally arrived, fans were shocked to not only find bugs in the game's practice mode, but also that the fatalities had been removed. Fans could not understand the last-minute decision to censor the game in the age of *Grand Theft Auto* and were even more offended given the high price paid for the release. The uproar became so severe that SNK Playmore issued an unprecedented global recall of the Japanese and English AES cartridges, replacing a ROM chip inside the cartridges to allow for "toned-down" fatalities. Meanwhile, during the recall process, a talented Neo Geo fan developed a method to unlock the full fatalities in the game code of the original release using a specialised system BIOS (the 'Universe BIOS'). Of course, this disappointed fans that had purchased the game at release, only to ship it right back to SNK Playmore for what was supposedly a superior version.

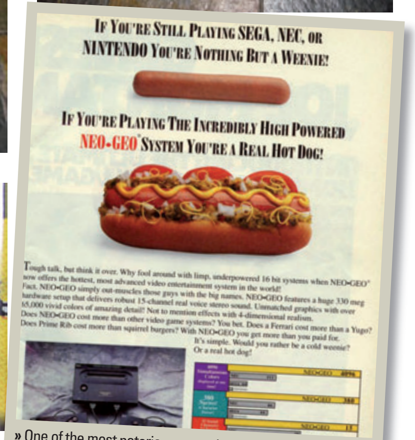
As a result of the recall, there are now both 'fixed' and 'unfixed' versions of this AES release – SNK placed a small Neo Geo logo sticker on the cartridge shells to identify 'fixed' versions. Today, original 'unfixed' cartridges are very scarce and command a premium in the collectors' market, since that is the only version to contain the full fatalities hidden in the game code. Looking back, the episode serves to highlight a certain disconnect that SNK Playmore had with its loyal fans, who were certainly mature enough to handle a little blood and violence after forking over $350+ for a game on a 14-year-old console.

At least it appears that SNK Playmore tried to send the Neo Geo off on the right note. The back of the game's English manual reads: "A FINAL FAREWELL: To all of our customers who have purchased NEOGEO ROM cartridges up till now. Thank you very much. We offer our most heartfelt gratitude for your loyal patronage over these 14 full years and hope for your continued support for our games on the many other platforms we will provide products for in the future. NEOGEO fans rule!"





» [Right] The final Japanese Neo Geo AES release, *Samurai Spirits Zero Special*. [Far Right] *Metal Slug X* was an improved remix of *Metal Slug 2*.



» One of the most notorious magazine advertisements from the early days of the Neo Geo, intended to give Nintendo, NEC and Sega gamers a serious inferiority complex.





» A row of English-version home cartridge releases, illustrating the 'meg count' displays and game logos directly on the spines.



» *Neo Turf Masters* is a fantastic golf game by Nazca, the same team responsible for *Metal Slug*. Like many AES games released in 1996, an authentic cartridge will cost you plenty.



of all time. Many titles actually sell for more than their original MSRP on the used market, and a select few even fetch thousands of dollars in the rare event that a copy pops up for sale. This has led to an influx of counterfeit AES titles that can be nearly indistinguishable from SNK originals, so buyers should take care to buy only from trusted sellers. On the bright side, many of the early release titles had relatively large print runs, and brand new stock is frequently sold at reasonable prices for those interested in getting into the system.

As time went on, the games themselves continued to improve and astonish. SNK illustrated a new mastery of the ageing hardware with each new release, such as *Blazing Star* in 1998, a tour-de-force among horizontal shooters, or the sublime *Last Blade 2* in 1999, which proved SNK's mastery of the weapons-based fighter. Meanwhile, the evolution of the internet attracted new gamers to the console who longed for the 2D glory days as 3D polygonal graphics took hold of the games industry. Fans began snapping up cartridges to add to their collection as popular Neo websites began registering users by the thousands. Shawn McCleskey has owned and operated Neo-Geo.com, the most popular of all Neo-devoted websites, since 2000.

"Anyone can own a port or download the ROM, but to own these games in their original form has enchanting appeal and is very rewarding," says McCleskey. "These games are art, from the packaging to the very game stored on the SNK boards, and to own Neo Geo home carts is to own a piece of hardcore 2D gaming history."

So how did the Neo Geo finally die? Even in 2004, after enduring the bankruptcy of SNK – later re-emerging as SNK Playmore – and spanning three different console generations, the hardware and games still proved popular in the arcades. The problem lay within the technology itself. When the Neo Geo was designed, piracy issues were simply not a major concern among the developers, mostly because the necessary ROM chips were so expensive to purchase. As a result, both the AES and MVS have no built-in copy protection. Over time, the price of ROM chips declined drastically, allowing pirates to manufacture bootleg cartridges in bulk for a tidy profit. To thwart the problem, SNK attempted to integrate various types of copy protection into some of the later releases, with little success. Toward the end of the system's life, a flood of illegitimate bootleg cartridges almost instantly followed each new MVS cartridge release. The problem eventually proved too great for SNK Playmore to overcome, and it was forced to move on to developing games for more modern hardware. Because MVS development ceased, so too did official support of the Neo Geo AES. Many have speculated that if it weren't for the rampant piracy that plagued the MVS hardware in the 21st Century, SNK Playmore would still be manufacturing Neo Geo games today, thanks to the massive install base of the MVS hardware.

Today, over five years after its demise, the Neo Geo AES still has a massive legion of fans and hardcore collectors worldwide. The games continue to resonate with those who appreciate unmatched 2D graphics and animation combined with frantic, arcade-style gameplay. There is a certain charisma inherent in most Neo Geo games that sends one back to a time of fierce head-to-head arcade competition while reminding us what makes videogames fun in the first place. Chad Okada experienced the Neo's rabid fandom first-hand: "The fans were incredible. I have not, to this day, met any people as devoted to a videogame machine as the people who were fans of the Neo Geo."

McCleskey, whose website continues to thrive, agrees: "The fact that the Neo Geo [AES] home cartridge system is the longest-supported game system by a manufacturer in videogame history should speak loads about how dedicated the community has been. I have no doubt that there would be plenty of interest to buy, own and play any new official release from SNK Playmore if we were given the opportunity."

Special thanks to Michael DiCioccio (Tonk) and Anthony Bacon (www.anthonywbacon.com) for additional photos

NEO·GEO PERFECT TEN



01

SAMURAI SHODOWN II

- » **RELEASE:** 1994
- » **PUBLISHER:** SNK
- » **CREATOR:** IN-HOUSE
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £20+

01 **With its beautiful** graphics, silky smooth animation and eclectic character roster, the second part of SNK's *Samurai Shodown* series is easily its best. The 202-meg cart featured new fighters, glorious backdrops and even slicker controls than the impressive original. A massive arcade success, *Samurai Shodown II* was a fantastic two-fingered salute to Capcom and proved that SNK's style and ambition knew no bounds. It certainly lacks the depth of later games in the series, but for sheer fun and accessibility *Samurai Shodown II* is without equal. A truly monumental fighter that still plays brilliantly today.

METAL SLUG

- » **RELEASE:** 1996
- » **PUBLISHER:** SNK
- » **CREATOR:** NAZCA CORPORATION
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £1,360+

02 **Nazca's *Metal Slug*** remains the definitive game in the series. Sure, we love *X* and *3*, but the original just does everything right. The action is fast and furious and the pacing is superb, while the level design and variation remains impressive. Bosses are extremely satisfying to defeat, the tunes perfectly suit the action, and the tongue-in-cheek humour immediately makes it stand apart from other run-and-guns. It's the glorious animation and the amazingly balanced gameplay, though, that proves to be *Metal Slug*'s trump card, not to mention that the titular tank is the cutest inanimate object we've ever seen.



02

THE LAST BLADE

- » **RELEASE:** 1997
- » **PUBLISHER:** SNK
- » **CREATOR:** IN-HOUSE
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £100+

03 **Now here's a** game that never seems to get enough love. Achingly beautiful – along with its sequel and *Garou*, it remains one of the Neo Geo's best-looking games – *The Last Blade*'s deliberate pacing, outrageous depth and balanced characters have earned it an army of fans, and yet it's nowhere near as well-known as *Samurai Shodown*. Its alarmingly deep gameplay, over-the-top moves, ability to parry, and glorious aesthetics helped usher in a new era of Neo Geo gaming and proved just how versatile the hardware was.

BLAZING STAR

- » **RELEASE:** 1998
- » **PUBLISHER:** SNK
- » **CREATOR:** YUMEKOBO
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £510+

04 **Sure, you can** laugh at its fractured English, but play Yumekobo's stunning shooter and you'll be gobsmacked. With its mesmerising pre-rendered sprites, insane bosses, and outrageous power-ups, the 346-meg *Blazing Star* always justifies its high price tag, and along with *Pulstar*, it remains the Neo Geo's finest blaster. *Blazing Star* assaults the player with excited speech, intense alien waves, finely tuned gameplay mechanics and humongous mayors. The end result is an amazing rollercoaster of a ride that you'll never want to end.

KING OF FIGHTERS '98: THE SLUGFEST

- » **RELEASE:** 1998
- » **PUBLISHER:** SNK
- » **CREATOR:** IN-HOUSE
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £95+

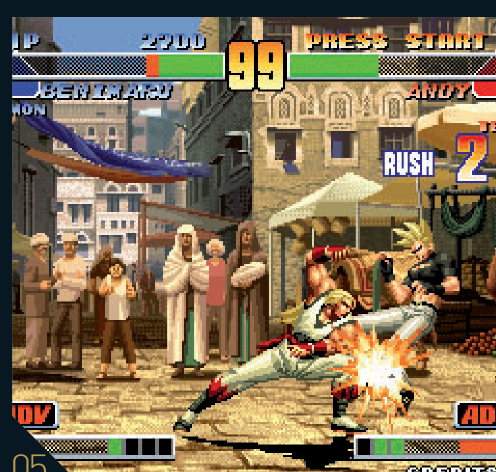
05 **It would have** been all too easy to select several *King Of Fighters* for our top ten, but this is easily our favourite. Everything about *King Of Fighters '98* just screams, 'Look at me! I'm so much better than everything else!' The gameplay is instantly accessible but offers a satisfying layer of depth and its cartoony visuals still look sensational, while its many and varied backgrounds are some of the most detailed around. Add in its massive roster of excellent characters and it's another essential AES purchase.



03



04



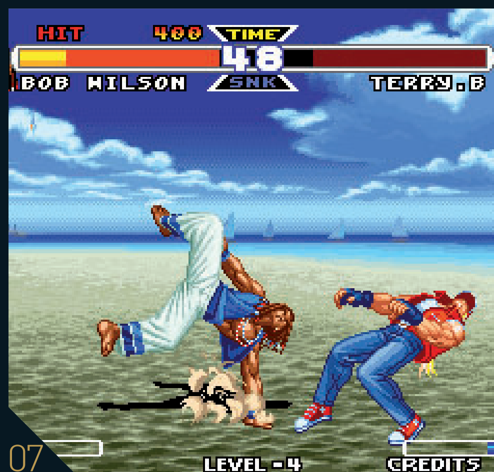
05

GAMES

With half the system's games being fighters, a fair few of them have made our Top 10. There are still some very classy – not to mention expensive – alternatives, though…



06



07



08

WINDJAMMERS

» **RELEASE:** 1994
» **PUBLISHER:** SNK
» **CREATOR:** DATA EAST
» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £95+

06 ***Windjammers* proves that** you don't need superlative visuals or complex fighting mechanics to become an essential AES release. Essentially nothing more than a tarted-up version of *Pong* – you fling a frisbee and use angles to slip it past your opponent – *Windjammers* is one of the finest multiplayer games on the system and combines slick controls and fast gameplay to create one of the most enjoyable games around. Like the best arcade games, it's easy to get into but includes enough nuances and techniques to ensure that you'll constantly return to it.

GAROU: MARK OF THE WOLVES

» **RELEASE:** 1999
» **PUBLISHER:** SNK
» **CREATOR:** IN-HOUSE
» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £340+

07 **There can't be** many **Retro Gamer** readers who aren't aware of this fantastic title, as we harp on about it every chance we get. Honestly, though, *Mark Of The Wolves* is basically the finest brawler on the AES and possibly the finest 2D fighter of all time. In addition to totally revitalising the *Fatal Fury* series, it boasts 11 new fighters, some of the best visuals to ever appear on the AES, and nigh-on perfect gameplay mechanics. It's expensive, but you could argue that you'd never need to buy another fighter.

NEO TURF MASTERS

» **RELEASE:** 1996
» **PUBLISHER:** SNK
» **CREATOR:** NAZCA CORPORATION
» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £1,000+

08 **Extremely tough to** get hold of – it currently has an 'extra extra rare' rating on Neo-Geo.com – this offering is still worth tracking down, providing you can afford it. While *Neo Turf Masters* (*Big Tournament Golf* in Japan) doesn't really bring anything innovative to the table, Nazca's superb offering plays an excellent version of the sport thanks to its slick presentation, tight controls and speedy pace. There are two modes to choose from, a variety of golfers, and some beautiful courses to play on. An excellent, surprisingly deep, game of golf.



09

FATAL FURY SPECIAL

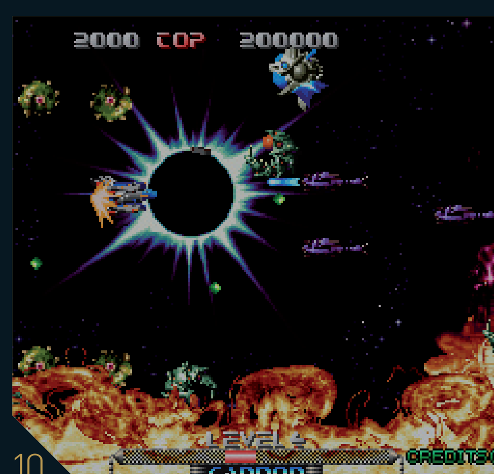
» **RELEASE:** 1993
» **PUBLISHER:** SNK
» **CREATOR:** IN-HOUSE
» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £20+

09 **Like *Garou* and** *The King Of Fighters '98, Fatal Fury Special* is available on Live Arcade for just 800 Points. Purists may want to go for the original, and with a nice low price point it's definitely worth picking up. Essentially an updated version of *Fatal Fury 2*, improvements include a new combo system, speedier overall gameplay and a far larger roster of playable characters. Indeed, you now have access to all the bosses from *FF2*, as well as the return of several non-player characters from the original *Fatal Fury*, including Geese Howard and Duck King. It looks wonderful as well, with massive sprites and glorious backdrops.

PULSTAR

» **RELEASE:** 1995
» **PUBLISHER:** SNK
» **CREATOR:** AICOM
» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £340+

10 **One day we'll** confirm that *Pulstar* was created by former Irem employees, but for the time being you'll just have to be content to play one of the Neo Geo's toughest shooters. Unflinchingly difficult – our hats are doffed to anyone who has 1CCed it – it requires a hell of a lot of skill to make any sort of progress but is so fantastically designed that you'll want to keep persevering regardless, especially once you've managed to get to grips with its excellent charge system. Despite its difficulty, *Pulstar* remains a sensational addition to any Neo Geo collection and is highly recommended to all hardcore shmup fans.



10

* **Cheapest prices according to Neo-Geo.com's current price guide**

NEO•GEO AES

and the rest…

Undeniably expensive, the Neo Geo is host to some of the finest arcade conversions around, as the following two pages prove. How many have you played?



- **01** METAL SLUG
- **02** ART OF FIGHTING
- **03** 2020 SUPER BASEBALL
- **04** VIEWPOINT
- **05** BLAZING STAR
- **06** NEO TURF MASTERS
- **07** SAMURAI SHODOWN II
- **08** FATAL FURY
- **09** NAM-1975
- **10** THE KING OF FIGHTERS '98: THE SLUGFEST
- **11** CROSSED SWORDS
- **12** ANDRO DUNOS
- **13** MAGICIAN LORD
- **14** DOUBLE DRAGON
- **15** METAL SLUG 3
- **16** EIGHT MAN
- **17** THE KING OF MONSTERS
- **18** PULSTAR
- **19** THE LAST BLADE
- **20** THRASH RALLY
- **21** ALPHA MISSION II
- **22** LAST RESORT
- **23** THE SUPER SPY
- **24** RIDING HERO
- **25** MUTATION NATION
- **26** SENGOKU
- **27** MAGICAL DROP II
- **28** SOCCER BRAWL
- **29** BASEBALL STARS 2
- **30** THE KING OF FIGHTERS '94
- **31** WORLD HEROES 2
- **32** WINDJAMMERS
- **33** GAROU: MARK OF THE WOLVES
- **34** NINJA MASTERS
- **35** STAKES WINNER 2
- **36** ART OF FIGHTING 3: THE PATH OF THE WARRIOR
- **37** BURNING FIGHT
- **38** KARNOV'S REVENGE
- **39** PUZZLE BOBBLE 2
- **40** REAL BOUT FATAL FURY SPECIAL
- **41** AERO FIGHTERS 2
- **42** SAMURAI SHODOWN IV: AMAKUSA'S REVENGE
- **43** CYBER-LIP
- **44** METAL SLUG X
- **45** SUPER SIDE KICKS
- **46** THE KING OF FIGHTERS '96
- **47** THE LAST BLADE 2
- **48** PREHISTORIC ISLE 2
- **49** TOP HUNTER: RODDY & CATHY
- **50** BREAKER'S REVENGE
- **51** NINJA COMMANDO
- **52** BLUE'S JOURNEY
- **53** PANIC BOMBER
- **54** GHOST PILOTS
- **55** FOOTBALL FRENZY
- **56** AERO FIGHTERS 3



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THE MAKING OF...

STAR WARS: THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

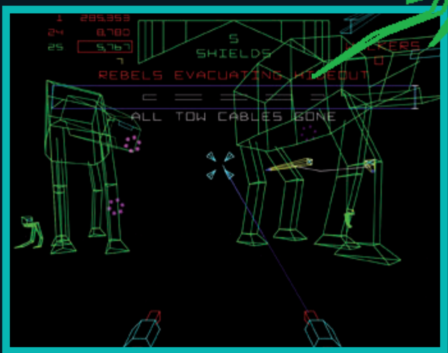
Atari's final 'classic' Star Wars game aped the original's style but not its success. Craig Grannell talks to project manager Mike Hally and programmer Greg Rivera to find out what went wrong



IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** ATARI GAMES
- » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
- » **PLATFORM:** ARCADE (LATER CONVERTED TO VARIOUS HOME SYSTEMS)
- » **RELEASED:** 1985
- » **GENRE:** FIRST-PERSON SHOOT-'EM-UP
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** FROM £400 FOR A WORKING CAB





» [Arcade] In hindsight, Greg Rivera wishes Atari had based the entire *Empire Strikes Back* game around the walker sequence.

Retro Gamer: What was the genesis of the game?


Mike Hally

Mike Hally: The *Empire* project was conceived as an upgrade kit to *Star Wars*, with simple cabinet artwork changes and a small memory expansion board to the existing hardware. This didn't provide more processing power, but enabled more complex images to be held in memory.

“I wasn't as happy with this as with Star Wars. And the movie's a real downer”

GREG RIVERA ON ADAPTING EMPIRE

With a coin-op base of over 10,000 units, Atari figured we could sell a bunch of new games and a large number of upgrade kits at a substantial profit, due to the super-low kit cost.

RG: How did you decide which movie scenes to use?

MH: I used the same approach as with *Star Wars*: I read the movie script and extracted major action sequences that told the movie's story. I started with the [probe droid] detection sequence, followed by the walkers and ended with the asteroid sequence.


» Greg Rivera

Greg Rivera: I wasn't as happy with this as with *Star Wars*. When trying to come up with levels to play, you had the AT-ATs as an obvious battle but not much else. And the movie's a real downer – *Star Wars* finishes with success, but *Empire* ends with failure. So you had one really good scene, and possibly the whole game should have been done with just the sequence of that battle.

The only good thing that comes out of the whole story is becoming a Jedi. But we couldn't really emphasise Yoda, because he dies – another downer – and so we had this ‘pinballish’ idea where you get bonus letters that spell ‘Jedi’ if you destroy a set number of targets. Become a Jedi and you're temporarily invincible.

RG: How well do you think the scenes worked?

GR: The probes were okay – that level was supposed to be a fun shoot-'em-up. They couldn't hurt you, but destroying them mattered in terms of how the rest of the game went – how much you could delay them. With the AT-ATs, we had issues in that the film's Snowspeeders use tail hooks. But in the game you can't see behind you and wouldn't have got the reward of seeing AT-ATs fall. So we changed the weapon to a front-firing cable. If I could go back, you'd get unlimited cables, because the feedback from players on this scene was great, and it was fun to see this huge monstrosity that's shooting at you collapse and fall when you catch its leg.

RG: The last two scenes were less innovative, though…

GR: The third level's basically a replay of the *Star Wars* TIE fighter battle – you can tell you're running out of ideas when you start stealing from your previous game! But it was fun and already tuned, and people liked it, so no one minded. And then the asteroids thing… We worked really hard trying to come up with something great for that level…

RG: So what happened?

GR: Well, it's hard doing dodgeball in perspective! The gist was we tried to have a maze come at you, so you could figure out how to wind your way through. But things come at you too fast, and all the vectors get confusing quickly. In the end, players gave up.

The thing is, we tried all sorts of stuff: ideas based on Ed Logg's *Asteroids*, and a version where you sort of bounced between asteroids, saw this huge asteroid take over the screen, and then went down a tunnel that had all sorts of twists and turns. At the very bottom was that giant snake thing from the movie, which you'd shoot and it'd go ‘RRAAARRR!’ or whatever. You'd then turn around and make a break for the exit, along the same path… but much faster! We couldn't make it so you could see enough to have any chance of reacting in time, though.

RG: How did it fare on release?

MH: I think we picked the best sequences and had some nice gameplay features, but *Empire* suffered from misconceptions that we didn't think of. We tried to use more complex objects and the game took a performance hit, and it also suffered from display issues.

GR: The trouble was, when Atari did *Star Wars* it bought a TV tube manufacturer, located on the Mexican border where it's really humid. The high-voltage power supplies would blow up after about a year, so when Atari tried selling *Empire*, people didn't want to repair their *Star Wars* cab and buy a kit. They'd rather just get a new game. And if their cab was still working, chances are people were still playing it, because *Star Wars* had a really long tail.

RG: So *Empire* also suffered because the original was too good?

MH: Right! *Star Wars* was a classic and operators tried to keep it running because it was such a consistent earner, and they were therefore reluctant to purchase another very similar game that could take money away from *Star Wars* by being the ‘new game in town’.

RG: So is this why Atari's *Star Wars* line stopped after *Empire*?

MH: Probably. *Empire* certainly wasn't as fresh as *Star Wars* and didn't really generate any new money for the operator. In the end, it went down in history as a decent idea and movie conversion that had little commercial success. I loved the process of working on the project, but we all made some improper assumptions on this one!

3D SPACE

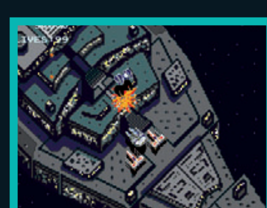
GREG RIVERA NOTES that, unlike *Star Wars*, *The Empire Strikes Back* has ‘full’ 3D: “Any vectors facing you are bright, but those making up the back side of an object dim and fade out. This meant that we didn't have to build objects in a similar way to the towers in *Star Wars*. With that game, only the front of objects is drawn, meaning they couldn't turn or you'd have seen that they were ‘hollow’. The 3D capability meant that we could add more advanced shapes to *Empire* and draw whole objects. For example, there are the probes in the first level, which spin around, look decent, and have other behaviours that simply didn't exist in the original *Star Wars* arcade game.”

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

STAR WARS
SYSTEM: ARCADE
YEAR: 1983

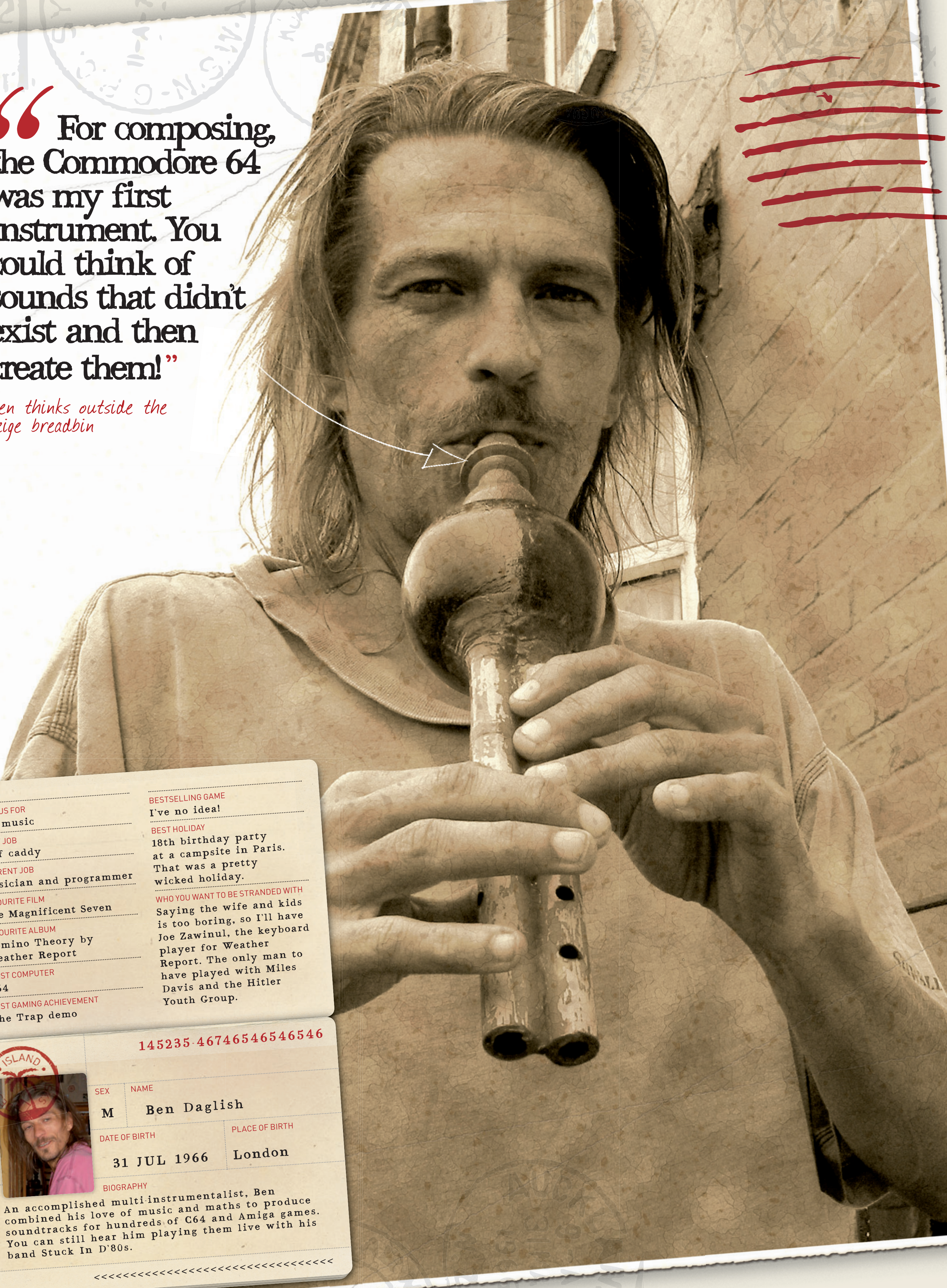
RETURN OF THE JEDI (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: ARCADE
YEAR: 1984

ROAD RUNNER
SYSTEM: ARCADE
YEAR: 1985



"For composing, the Commodore 64 was my first instrument. You could think of sounds that didn't exist and then create them!"

Ben thinks outside the beige breadbin



FAMOUS FOR
SID music

FIRST JOB
Golf caddy

CURRENT JOB
Musician and programmer

FAVOURITE FILM
The Magnificent Seven

FAVOURITE ALBUM
Domino Theory by Weather Report

FIRST COMPUTER
C64

BEST GAMING ACHIEVEMENT
The Trap demo

BESTSELLING GAME
I've no idea!

BEST HOLIDAY
18th birthday party at a campsite in Paris. That was a pretty wicked holiday.

WHO YOU WANT TO BE STRANDED WITH
Saying the wife and kids is too boring, so I'll have Joe Zawinul, the keyboard player for Weather Report. The only man to have played with Miles Davis and the Hitler Youth Group.

145235-46746546546546

SEX
M

NAME
Ben Daglish

DATE OF BIRTH
31 JUL 1966

PLACE OF BIRTH
London

BIOGRAPHY
An accomplished multi-instrumentalist, Ben combined his love of music and maths to produce soundtracks for hundreds of C64 and Amiga games. You can still hear him playing them live with his band Stuck In D'80s.

<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<

Ben Daglish

What cherished games would you take to the island?

Ben Daglish provided the soundtrack to your 8-bit youth, creating hundreds of memorable tunes for the Commodore 64. Here he tells Paul Drury about music, mushrooms and making the SID sing

"The inspiration for my music?" muses Ben Daglish, drawing hard on a reflective roll-up. "Does it sound good? You're walking down the street and you go, 'Boo-de-de-boo… Yeah, that sounds cool. What chords is that?' Every time I wander past the piano, I'll play a couple of random chords and…"

Ben jumps out of his seat, sticks the fag in the corner of his mouth, flicks back his hair and bangs his bony fingers down on the keys of the nearby upright piano. "Oooh, that's a nice little sequence," he grins, and he's off into the music of his mind.

To say music is an integral part of Ben's life is an understatement. The walls of his charming Derbyshire home are adorned with weird and wonderful instruments, which he'll often grab nonchalantly and begin strumming, beating or blowing. Our interview is frequently punctuated by him bursting into scat versions of game tunes, whether the inescapable *Tetris* song or something from his own illustrious back catalogue of videogame music. That's why we're here, of course. Even if you don't recognise his name, those of you who had a C64 in the Eighties will almost inevitably have blasted, bounced or burrowed to Ben's rhythm.

"For composing on, the Commodore 64 was my first instrument," he smiles. "It was the first time I was able to do stuff that was more than I could purely conceive in my head. I could think of something that I couldn't play… and then play it! You could think of sounds that didn't exist and then create them! You could break out of just what you could do with your fingers. People would ask me back then if the SID chip had been pushed as far as it could go. Well, has the flute? Has the piano?"

For Ben, the trusty 64 was not just a machine to re-interpret tunes; it was a unique musical instrument in itself. The wonderful Sound Interface Device chip inside the beige beast was pulsing with possibilities, and Ben was going to make it sing. Yet his musical upbringing was considerably more traditional. His parents ran a folk club in Ealing and the legendary singer Martin Carthy once bounced Baby Ben on his knee between sets in the mid-Sixties. The family left London while Ben was still in nappies and moved to Stannington near Sheffield. There, among the hills of the Peak District, his mother taught him how to play penny whistle, and his precocious musical talent began to grow. Folk, jazz and classical music was the soundtrack to his childhood, until the intervention of secondary school classmate Diane Mayers.

"She came up to me and said, ''Ere, you play drums, don't you?'," recalls Ben. "My main study was orchestral percussion. So she thrust this Walkman at me and it was playing Led Zeppelin's *Moby Dick* with Jon Bonham's live drum solo. Up to that point I was a short-haired academic little boy into classical music and studying. Six months later I had hair halfway down my back and was hanging out with all the rockers, participating in all those things you did in the Eighties…"

Bless you, Diane, though the influence of another schoolmate would have an even greater bearing on Ben's future direction. In the year above him was one Tony Crowther, a name familiar to Commodore gamers everywhere as the creator of *Blagger*, *Monty Mole* and *Captive*, although at this stage he was still tapping out simple programs on the school's BBC Micro. And that was partly thanks to Ben…

"I won a BBC computer for the school by writing this essay on how computers could be used in schools in the future," explains Ben in a high-pitched geek voice. "I wrote a page and a half of crap and was amazed that a few months later, this 16K BBC Model A arrived. It was the only one in school and they kept it in the library. Because I'd won it, I was allowed to come in at lunchtime and play on it. So was Tony, because the bloke who ran the library knew Tony had already started mucking about with computers…"

The librarian-cum-software publishing entrepreneur was a chap called Ian Warby, who proceeded to recruit a select crew of schoolboy coders and released their output under the

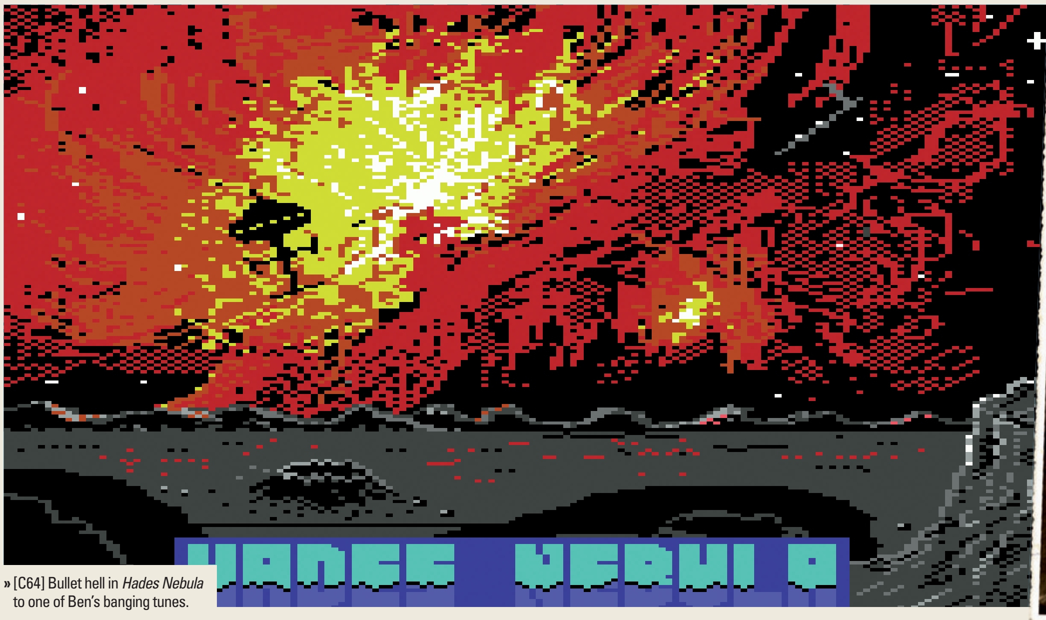
Trivia

Ben recently did an interview for the Wii Channel, declaring his love of *Impossible Mission* on the Virtual Console. Nintendo sent him a Wii for his trouble.



Want to see Ben playing live? Head to www.c64audio.com and get his DVD for £19.95

DESERT ISLAND DISKS



» [C64] Bullet hell in *Hades Nebula* to one of Ben's banging tunes.

Ben in action



If you see SID, tell him…

"Rob Hubbard was the best, obviously," says Ben without hesitation when asked to rate his fellow C64 maestros. "He invented what you could do with the SID. He was always ahead. He was older than us and had toured the world as a keyboardist. He had the musical and the programming ability. I remember when he came to work with me on *Monty*: he had this secret two hours where he put our music together with his driver. There was this thing about 'Rob's driver'. No one saw it or how it worked. He was absolute top and then Martin Galway at number two. He was very good but he didn't really socialise. He only did stuff for Ocean whereas the rest of us were freelance and met up with each other. At one point in the mid-Eighties, Rob, David Whittaker and I were talking about becoming a unified force and setting up a company to do all the game music for every developer in England. Martin said he wasn't interested. He was happy to sit in his concrete bunker in Manchester doing his own thing. I thought he'd got a bit of a problem. I only really got to chat to him properly about four years ago at a Bit Live event and suddenly found out what a lovely, unassuming bloke he is. Oh and getting pissed with Dave was always an education."

For more on the wonderfully vibrant world of SID music, see **www.hvsc.c64.org** for those original tunes and then visit **www.c64audio.com** or **www.remix64.com** to hear clever things people have done with them. Plus look out for an in-depth feature in a forthcoming issue of **Retro Gamer**.

banner of Aztec Games. "We must have done 20-odd titles and they sold loads," says Ben. "Almost every school in the country had something from us. We never made any money ourselves, but every six months, Ian would take us all out for a slap-up meal at the local steak house."

This *Beano*-like arrangement may not have delivered immediate rewards beyond a full stomach, but it did give Tony and Ben a taste of the emerging software industry. Thus when Ben dropped out of a degree in maths and computing at Essex University, bored of doing "Noddy little Pascal programs", he found his old mate Tony producing full commercial releases for Alligata and in need of a little musical assistance.

"Tony asked if I could do him a death march for *Potty Pigeon*," remembers Ben. "Then he wanted Jean Michel Jarre's *Equinoxe 5* for *Loco*. He'd write the driver and I'd type in the notes. I enjoyed doing it but it was when I heard the version of *English Country Garden* on Jeff Minter's *Hover Bovver*, the lovely job they'd done with just three voices, that I thought 'Ooh, you can do interesting stuff with this thing…'"

The boys got busy and after a week of working through the night, fuelled by coffee and Thousand Island dressing sandwiches, they had put together a demo showcasing their efforts. The WEMUSIC sampler – the convenient acronym stands for 'We Make Use of Sound In Computers' – was duly distributed on 5¼-inch floppy disk to software houses, taken to computer shows and uploaded to the proto-web service Compunet, and soon the phone started ringing.

"I'd get calls from Gremlin, BT Firebird, Alligata, of course," remembers Ben. "Early on I'd be like, 'Ooh yeah, can I come and see a demo?' I'd go to the office, see the game in development, talk to the programmers. Other times, I'd do it without seeing the game. 'You want generic martial arts music? For the day after tomorrow? There you go…'"

Which reminds us of his work on *The Last Ninja*, particularly the memorable and much-remixed Wastelands theme. The music seems to complement the on-screen action so beautifully that surely he was intimately involved in the game's development?

"No, that was all done on the phone," laughs Ben, "though there was quite a lot of talking, if I recall. Mark Cale [head of System 3] was pretty specific about what he wanted and he wanted a lot. I did half and Anthony [Lees] did half. Mark would say, 'We've got this level and this happens.' I think I saw some graphics too but not a demo and I think I spoke to the programmer John Twiddy, too. The main task after doing the music was integrating Tony's driver code into the game. He'd done a lot of work getting his code as small, as fast and as tight as possible. It was all about raster time; how much CPU time you could take up. I turned up in London with the disks and played around with the programmer for a day getting it to all work. Then Mark turned to me and said, 'So how much do you want for this?' I think I was charging a grand or two. He said, 'I'll give you my BMW.' He had this dodgy left-hand drive he'd brought into the country under dubious circumstances. I later found out that was fairly typical of how he did business…"

Ben wisely decided to take cash instead. Indeed, the readies were rolling in through the second half of the Eighties, with Ben estimating he contributed music and sound effects to over 200 titles, charging anywhere between a hundred and a thousand pounds a time. "An average job would be

Trivia

Up to the age of 14, Ben's musical tastes were folk, jazz and classical. It was Tony Crowther who introduced him to the joys of Jean Michel Jarre and the Yellow Magic Orchestra.

Timeline

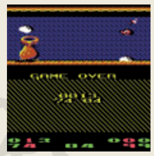
POTTY PIGEON
■ **YEAR:** 1984
■ **VERSION:** C64
Ben's first game music was the death march theme that accompanied your demise in Tony Crowther's feathery take on *Defender*.



LOCO
■ **YEAR:** 1984
■ **VERSION:** C64
This excellent version of Jean Michel Jarre's *Equinoxe 5* first brought Ben's talents to the attention of the games press.



KETTLE
■ **YEAR:** 1987
■ **VERSION:** C64
Ben assures us that this demented take on *Polly Put The Kettle On* was not inspired by any funny mushrooms in the teapot.



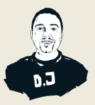
THING BOUNCES BACK
■ **YEAR:** 1987
■ **VERSION:** C64
Ben based the music for this sequel on Rob Hubbard's work on the original *Thing On A Spring* and was particularly chuffed to get the boing right.



The Team On Daglish

Here's what **Retro Gamer** has to say about Ben's compositions...



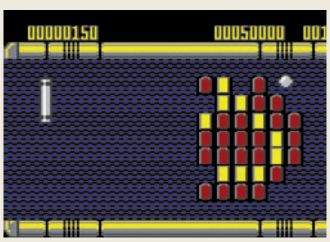


Darran Jones
Not owning a C64 when I was a child meant that the only times I heard Ben's work was when I was over a friend's house. That all changed, however, when forum member Markopoloman played a CD of his greatest hits on the way back from the last Retro Fusion event. Even now I can't work out how he made the C64 sing, but I'm glad he did.





Paul Drury
Try playing a game with the sound off. It's just not the same, is it? Growing up as I did with the C64, Ben's work is inextricably linked with so many great gaming memories, yet his musicianship means those tunes stand up on their own merits. And you must witness him playing live. He really does put the 'mentalist' into 'multi-instrumentalist'...





Stuart Hunt
Music in videogames can easily play second fiddle (pun intended) to the glitz of great graphics, but soundtracks play a vital role in helping to create a tangible atmosphere in games. Ben produced music for two of my favourites: *Switchblade* and *Kettle*. And I think Ben's compositions complemented the themes, visuals and gameplay of these games brilliantly.

intro music, tunes for five levels, 30 sound effects and a death tune. I'd do that for £500, which was a week's work or sometimes a day's," he grins. "Sound effects were a pain in the arse. Piddly f**king 'booo' – there you go. Then they'd say, 'No, we want it a bit more atmospheric.' Christ..."

Ben grimaces before gurgling through some more of his best spot sounds. He openly acknowledges that he can't remember half the work on his long list of credits, partly because he was never told the name of the game in the first place, but he does recall fondly some of his collaborations with Tony.

"Tony is the most naturally gifted programmer I've ever known, and I've known a lot," he smiles. "*Trap* was the classic one. I saw the game from its conception. We had this idea of putting in the demo at the end. The idea was always to hide it away but then it turned into this ten-minute opus. Possibly it was a shame that it was hidden away but then it was a good reward for finishing the game. *William Wobbler* was another one. That was the first time I did a separate soundtrack for a cassette, using an early Korg synth. An ultra-bouncy tune that went so well with the movement of the character..."

And he's up at the piano again, banging out the jaunty tune and thrusting his chin back and forth like Quagmire from *Family Guy*. Those were heady days indeed and none more so than when he got to collaborate with one of his heroes.

"I was doing the music for *Auf Wiedersehen Monty* for Gremlin and as Rob Hubbard had done the original, they thought it would be nice to have him come in on it too. Rob's just the best and I felt completely unworthy. I had this little office and we just crammed in it and jammed on the keyboards for three days. I don't remember sleeping. Jammed, drank and toked... and magically this piece appeared."

By this stage, Ben had become the in-house music man at Gremlin, lured away from freelancing with the promise of his own studio, an Atari ST and the best musical gadgets 1986 had to offer. He got to work with such talented programmers as Colin '*Fungus The Bogeyman*' Dooley, Shaun Hollingsworth and Pete Harrap, and he talks fondly of his soundtracks for *Federation Of Free Traders*, *Dark Fusion* and *Cobra*.

"We were the Gremlin lads, getting pissed every night at the pub across the road," laughs Ben, "and it was great... for a year. You can tell with the music when it becomes a job, writing stuff by rote rather than being inspired. The company had grown, there was a lot of work and I was handling it

> "People would ask me if the SID chip had been pushed as far as it could go. Well, has the flute?"

The C64: the 8-bit that keeps giving...



Daglish on Daglish

We asked Ben to pick his three favourite tunes from his extensive repertoire of game music



■ THE LAST NINJA: THE WASTELANDS
I've always been amazed by the reaction it's had. I think it's because all the bits come together really nicely. I find it heartening that people see the point of the tunes out of context, listening to them not as they're playing the game.



■ TRAP
Because of the orchestration. I got timps, a string section... When Chris [Abbot] arranged it as an orchestral piece, it was a good one! My biggest, hardest, longest piece, as it were. I wrote a nine-voice arrangement and Tony [Crowther] used the joystick ports to synchronise the C64s.



■ DEFLEKTOR
A corking bit of rock with great cowbell. That was the reason it came out as it did. I'd discovered how to do this really good cowbell sound.

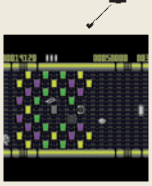
There must be a good 20 remixes out there. I love the dub reggae one, and Reyn's [Ouwehand] version with the 'Day Ohs' is beautifully done.



Ben regales us with another from his instrument collection

1987 — 1989 — 1991 — 1997

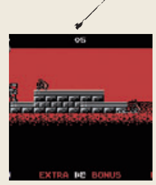
KRAKOUT
■ YEAR: 1987
■ VERSION: C64
A favourite among the Commodore 64 remix scene. "The live version by Press Play On Tape blew me away," adds Ben.



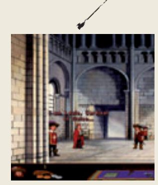
DARK FUSION
■ YEAR: 1989
■ VERSION: C64
With Ben's pumping soundtrack and graphics by Bernie Drummond, this scrolling shooter was a treat for eyes and ears.



SWITCHBLADE
■ YEAR: 1991
■ VERSION: C64
One of Ben's final pieces of music for the C64 accompanied this platformer-cum-beat-'em-up from Gremlin Graphics.



TOUCHE
■ YEAR: 1997
■ VERSION: PC
Ben not only provided the soundtrack to this adventure but also scripted it and devised some of the esoteric puzzles.



Readers' Questions

■ **Drewbar:** For me, The Wastelands from *The Last Ninja* is the peak of C64 music. Where did the inspiration for this sound come from?

From the Orient! [laughs] A famous composer once said it was nothing to do with visual inspiration, like seeing a beautiful sunset or something. Music's a completely separate thing. The inspiration for music is simply 'Does it sound good?'

■ **Necronom:** Which SID tune by someone else is your favourite?

My favourite ever was *Masters Of Magic*, which I thought was Rob. [Ben jumps up and starts playing it] I only learned recently that he'd ripped it off from some American soundtrack composer from the mid-Eighties, which I was most disappointed by. He did a brilliant arrangement anyway.

■ **Doddsy:** Do you ever wish some dance act would nick one of your riffs?

F*ck no. Actually a bit of *Last Ninja* got used on a record by DragonForce. He took the guitar solo note for note. I get 20p per album or something. I don't think they sold enough to cover the postage but yeah, they asked our permission. I get lots of people asking me if they can use a bit of my music in things so if a dance act wants to, then fine, but I'm not sitting waiting in hope.

■ **Northway:** Seriously, what did you put in the teapot when you did the music for *Kettle*?

I did do a lot of mushrooms at school but it was just hash in those days. You can't compose when you're tripping out your face. Well, you can and you think it sounds wonderful when it's actually shit. Drugs contribute to my general outlook on life but I've never written better stoned or not stoned. And yeah, I've tried both ways.

■ **DRS:** Have you ever considered going back into programming game music?

As soon as you could stream real music from a CD, that was the end of the programming side of game music. As soon as sampling came in with the Amiga, that's when the rot set in. Actually, I'm currently involved in a project with Jon Hare called Sensible Soundware. We'll be distributing various bits of music we've both done, old and new. Not necessarily just games music but stuff associated with it from our time in the industry.

■ **The Master:** Who is your favourite Doctor Who?

Got to be Tom Baker. That question is really, 'Who was Doctor Who when you were 12?' isn't it? And the best that never was, Brian Blessed!

» [C64] *Firelord* benefited hugely from Ben's atmospheric score.









» [C64] *William Wobbler* was one of many collaborations with old mate Tony Crowther.

all. I was knocking them out. When I was knocking them out ten at night till four in the morning it still felt creative and bohemian, but now it was trying to do it nine to five… I found I was going home at night and not listening to music. Plus I didn't like working in an office. Suddenly, there were all these blokes in suits talking about shipping boxes and they'd no idea what was in the box. It turned into a business and I didn't enjoy it any more."

Feeling his creativity was being stifled and not enjoying the new corporate ethos at Gremlin, he left the company, but he didn't quite leave game development just yet.

"This is hidden history," winks Ben. "There's nothing on the net about this." He lights another roll-up and proceeds to tell us the strange tale of lost arcade game *Septima*.

"A complete chancer called Stuart Firth managed to con a machine from Silicon Graphics, this big projector system off some other company and borrowed money from here, there and everywhere, with this crazy idea to build an arcade game. It had a big semi-circular console with up to seven players shooting guns at a screen the size of this wall. Spaceships were coming out of the screen at you and you had to blast them, like 3D *Space Invaders*, basically. I remember doing the soundtrack in Wales with a studio engineer that used to be in T'Pau. Anyway, we had it running in an arcade in Portsmouth in a cubicle the size of this room for a couple of weeks in about 1988 or '89 and we showed it at a trade show in Blackpool. Sega loved it and wanted to buy it. They bought the prototype from us and some of us went over to Japan for evaluation. Sega said, 'Lovely. We'll have a hundred,' and we thought, 'That's it, our fortune is made!' Then suddenly they said, 'No thanks, we don't want it.' The money they'd paid for the prototype just about paid off our debts, but we had no money to build another one. We were stuffed. Two or three years later I saw a game by one of Sega's subsidiaries: a four or five-player shooting game almost exactly the same. Stuart

> **"We jammed, drank and toked for three days and this piece appeared"**
>
> *Ben explains how to mix business and pleasure*

was trying to get a court case together for ages but it didn't come to anything…"

Thoroughly disillusioned, Ben left games and began doing music for theatre with his partner, Sarah. He briefly rejoined the fold in 1992, working on 16-bit RPG *Legends Of Valour*. This was followed in 1997 by considerable input from Ben and Sarah on witty adventure *Touche* for US Gold. The company was duly impressed and was very interested in an idea he and Sarah pitched for a point-and-click adventure called *Gadzooks!*, set in Elizabethan London, until a buyout by Eidos abruptly ended the project. Ben now earns a crust through numerous musical enterprises and web design work, and thanks to his involvement in the Back in Time events and the marvellous SID'80s, who do stirring live versions of old game music including his own, he is a familiar face at 8-bit musical events.

"When I was writing those tunes, in my head I was writing for a rock band or string quartet and making the best arrangement I could on the C64, so to have them performed by rock bands is great. Playing live to my constituency – 50-year-old folkies and 30-year-old geeks! And I am King Geek!"

We'll see you all down the front at a gig soon, then. All hail to the king…

Thanks to Andrew 'Merman' Fisher for his help with this article.

Ben Daglish's

Desert Island Disks

The games that Ben just couldn't live without and why he loves them

01 Master Of The Lamps C64

Top game, great music and I liked the whole concept. A level of flying through the rings and then a level of the genie coming out of his lamp, smoking his bong. The first lot of 14 levels were colours and sounds, the next lot were just the colours and the next just the sounds. I was one of the few people who could complete it because I could remember the sequence of eight notes and play the bubbles like a keyboard.

02 Fable XBOX

I was very impressed watching *Fable*. I didn't play it that much but I watched the kids playing it a lot and it's just beautiful. Did they choose good or evil? Both! They played it through twice and I think they liked being bad most. A great game. Really lovely.

03 Doom PC

We'd all played around with 3D engines but *Doom* was the first that really made you go, 'Woah, this is the future of computer gaming.' And to be honest it still is the future. We haven't really come on a long way since. *Quake*, *Halo*… they're all really *Doom*, aren't they?

04 Planetoids BBC

All those Acornsoft games were spot-on. The *Pac-Man* was great and this *Defender* clone was perfect. Swish, lovely… I spent hours, days, weeks playing this. Stunning. In terms of the accuracy it was a beautiful bit of programming.

05 Day Of The Tentacle PC

I liked all those LucasArts games but *Day Of The Tentacle* in particular. That was the one. Cracking plot and great clues. This is just the ultimate point-and-click adventure.

06 The Sentinel C64

The pillars, the hills, what was it called… ah yes, *The Sentinel*! Killer idea, killer everything. Completely original. I've often talked of the lack of originality in the professional games market. You do get lots of originality on the net with people making their own little Flash games. Bizarre stuff is coming back in!

07 Impossible Mission C64

Always liked this. It's the one I was interviewed about for the Wii Channel. Those lovely running man graphics. The first running person that really looked like he was running before *Prince Of Persia* and stuff came along. The animation just made us go 'Wow!' We could sit and watch him run around for ages. Stay a while, stay forever!

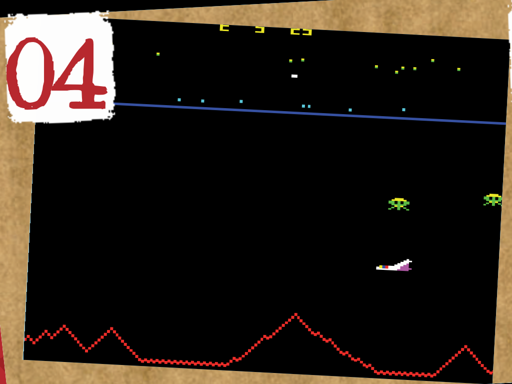
08 Tetris GB

Because it goes ding, ding-ding-ding, ding-ding-ding, ding, ding, ding… for years! One of the few games that even now, ten years later, I can dig out a Game Boy, stick some batteries in, turn it on and I'm right there. I can play it all the way to the end, see the spaceship going off and the guys doing the legs. Yeah, *Tetris*!





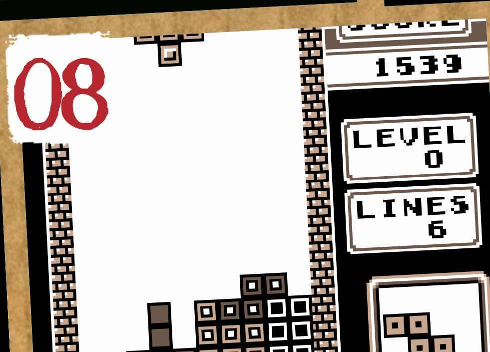


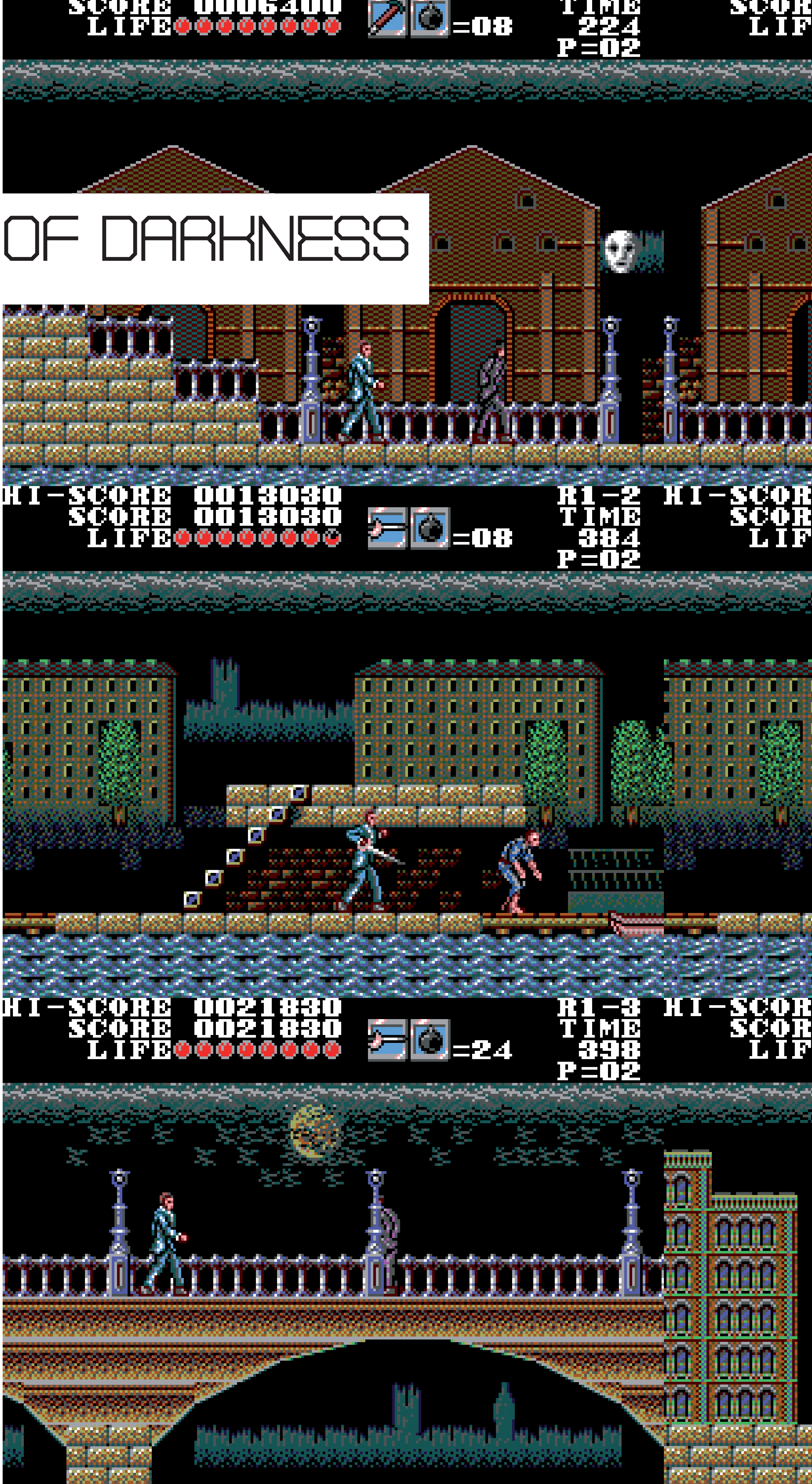












MASTER OF DARKNESS

CASTLEVANIA, SEGA-STYLE



- **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
- **RELEASED:** 1992
- **GENRE:** ACTION
- **FEATURED HARDWARE:** MASTER SYSTEM
- **EXPECT TO PAY:** £5



HISTORY

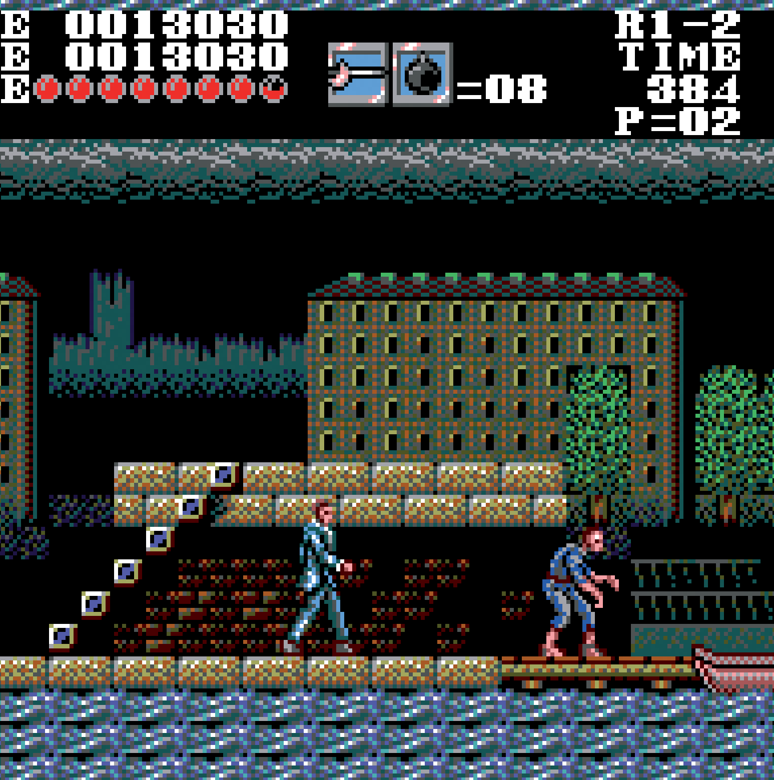
As you can probably guess from staring at this selection of accompanying screenshots for all of about a second, *Master Of Darkness* was a *Castlevania*-style action game published by Sega, developed by Sims and released on the Master System and Game Gear, and a bloody good one at that. See what we did there?

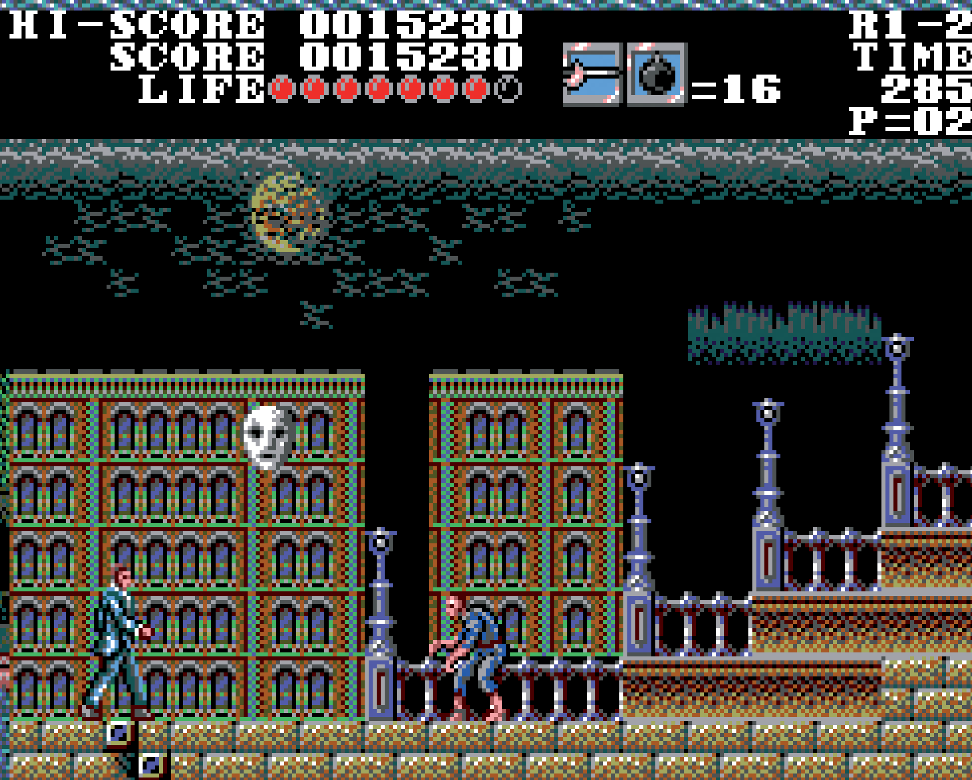
Playing the role of the stupidly named Dr Social, your mission was to help the doc traverse a series of dangerous parts of London in order to reach the Thames, where a battle with the Prince of Darkness himself, Count Dracula, awaits. He's doing this, by the way, because a ouija board told him to at the start of the game, which is weird. But anyway, on his walk he meets all sorts of strange and bizarre enemies, including loopy dogs, waxwork dolls that spring to life, floating women, guys with guns, guys with knives and basically a skipload of things that seem to either have a real disdain for doctors or an unhealthy and selfish obsession with the Thames.

To help aid our hero on his quest, smashing theatre masks that float in the sky reveals either hidden health, weapons – including a gun, knife, rapier, hammer and boomerang – or a handy diamond that cleans the screen of enemies like a smart bomb. Yep, it's utterly weird, and in its day the violence in the game probably managed to raise quite a few eyebrows – mercilessly slaughtering human beings and dogs with a hammer, regardless of how desperate you are to reach the Thames, is probably teetering on the realms of provocative. In any case, *Master Of Darkness* is a fantastic and oft-underplayed classic that you should certainly seek out if you can get your hands on a Master System. It's wonderfully playable, boasts simple controls and gameplay, and the game is as enjoyable as it was when it first came out. If you're looking for a great action game to sink your teeth into – sorry… – this doctor sociably prescribes a heavy dose of *Master Of Darkness*.


0007600
=08
TIME
218
P=02


SCORE 0012730
LIFE
=08
P=02


0013030
0013030
=08
R1-2
TIME
384
P=02

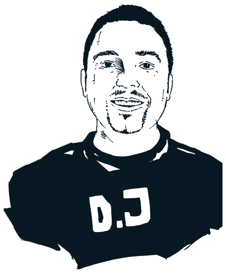

HI-SCORE 0015230
SCORE 0015230
LIFE
=16
TIME
P=02


0023030
0023030
=24
R1-3
TIME
381
P=02


HI-SCORE 0025130
SCORE 0025130
LIFE
=31
TIME
318
P=02

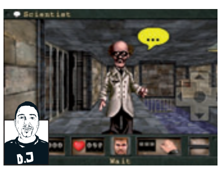
RETRORATED

» SOUL CALIBUR: BROKEN DESTINY

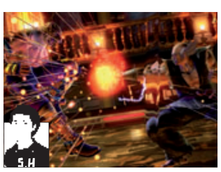


» It's a bit of a fight fest this month as we look at both Soul Calibur: Broken Destiny and Tekken 6. Elsewhere there's the usual round-up of iPhone games and a look at Tecmo's last addition to its Ninja Gaiden franchise...

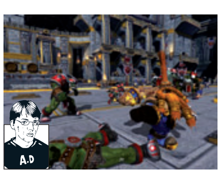
PICKS OF THE MONTH



DARRAN
Wolfenstein RPG
Carmack's iPhone port was impressive, but this plays far better and is funnier to boot.



STUART
Tekken 6
Tekken 6 proves King and co still offer some of the best arcade beat-'em-up action around.



ASHLEY
Blood Bowl
As a straight adaptation of the board game, this does exactly what I'd expect. Job done.



» [PSP] We'll go so far as to say that Kratos is the best crossover character to be added to the franchise ever.



GO DEEPER

The facts behind Soul Calibur: Broken Destiny

» The Soul Edge is an evil sword, while the Soul Calibur is a holy sword created to destroy it.

» Past crossover characters have included *Zelda*'s Link, *Tekken*'s Heihachi, Todd McFarlane's Spawn, Yoda, The Apprentice, Darth Vader and now *God Of War*'s Kratos.

» Cervantes, Mitsurugi, Nightmare, Siegfried, Sophitia and Taki are the only characters to appear in every *Soul Calibur* game.



» [PSP] It wouldn't be a *Soul Calibur* game without lots of girls and jiggly bits.

Soul Calibur: Broken Destiny

THE SOUL STILL BURNS, BUT ONLY JUST

INFORMATION

- **FEATURED SYSTEM:** PSP
- **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** N/A
- **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- **PRICE:** £24.99
- **PUBLISHER:** UBISOFT
- **DEVELOPER:** NAMCO BANDAI
- **PLAYERS:** 1-2

BRIEF HISTORY

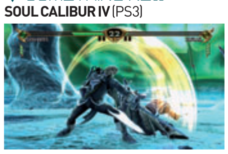
» The *Soul* series began with *Soul Edge* in 1996 and proved to be an excellent 3D weapon-based brawler. The sequel, *Soul Calibur*, stunned everyone with its incredible Dreamcast debut, while later games have featured guest characters ranging from *The Legend Of Zelda*'s Link to Darth Vader and Yoda.

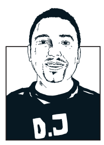
WHY NOT TRY

▼ SOMETHING OLD
THE LAST BLADE (NEO GEO AES)



▽ SOMETHING NEW
SOUL CALIBUR IV (PS3)





Now this is a pleasant surprise. Namco has crammed its popular *Soul Calibur* franchise into the PSP's tiny innards, and while it's not perfect, it's easily one of the PSP's best recent fighters.

The first thing that strikes you about *Broken Destiny* is just how gob-smackingly gorgeous it looks. Animation is wonderfully slick and fluid, and the character models look fantastic, while the backgrounds are awash with detail. Aurally it also manages to wow, and although the tunes aren't quite up to the standard found in *Soul Edge* or *Soul Calibur*, they nevertheless manage to get the blood stirring as you battle on screen.

Those expecting part *IV*'s *Star Wars* characters to turn up are going to be disappointed by their absence, but we do get a brand new character by the name of Dampierre and the mighty Kratos from Sony's *God Of War* to enjoy. Dampierre is a superb addition and funny to boot and has a nice range of close and extremely quick attacks. Kratos, on the other hand, is an absolute beast, with moves straight out of the hit series that can do an insane amount of damage.

Sadly, while *Broken Destiny*'s new characters are solid additions and bring the available fighters up to an impressive 28, its gameplay modes aren't quite up to the same standard.

The lengthy Gauntlet is nothing more than an extended tutorial, requiring you to perfect the same moves over and over, while Quick Match allows you to face off against a variety of virtual players. Trials is a little more substantial and consists of the Trials of Attack and Defence, which score you on how well you chain combos or use guard attacks and counters, while Endless Trials is effectively a survival mode. There are also the standard versus and training modes to enjoy. The end result is a very pretty and solid fighter that just doesn't have enough meat on its bones.

OPINION



Namco has done a resplendent job of cramming *Soul Calibur* into the PSP. It looks amazing, and the immediacy, chunky fighters and pick-up-and-play nature are suited brilliantly to portable play. The lack of an arcade mode is a tad disappointing, but the other modes make up for the omission.

Stuart Hunt

In a nutshell

A pleasing addition to the *Soul Calibur* franchise, but surely it wouldn't have hurt to include a proper arcade mode? Fans will lap it up, though, while the addition of Kratos is a masterstroke.

» Scores

Presentation	70%
Graphics	94%
Sound	75%
Playability	88%
Addictivity	72%

Overall 75%

Gridrunner Revolution

retro GAMER SIZZLER

JEFF PROVES HE HASN'T FALLEN OFF THE GRID...

» **FEATURED SYSTEM:** PC » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** N/A » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
» **PRICE:** $20 (APPROX £12.50) » **PUBLISHER:** LLAMASOFT » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE » **PLAYERS:** 1



While we were taken back by the addictiveness of Jeff Minter's last game, *Space Giraffe*, there were many who didn't really gel with the game. *Gridrunner Revolution* is a psychedelic update of Minter's early VIC-20 and C64 game, which already saw a trippy PC update in 2002 with *Gridrunner++*. This latest update retains Minter's signature of wacky, innovative gaming while staying faithful to the source material.

In terms of reacting to those criticisms fired at *Space Giraffe*, whether you deem them fair or not, and in a bid to appease both the casual and hardcore crowd, we doubt Minter could have done a better job, because *Revolution* actually allows the player to set the style and bedlam of play. Essentially, the game can be played as a conventional top-down shooter – shoot things, collect things, stay alive – or, with a number of subtle gameplay techniques to help heighten the experience, reach some unbelievable high scores and basically get the very best out of the experience.

Practised players, for instance, can change ships on the fly and use gravity pockets and black holes to organise the trajectory of their bullets. These elements are key to exponentially raising your score and unlocking impressive and jaw-dropping games.

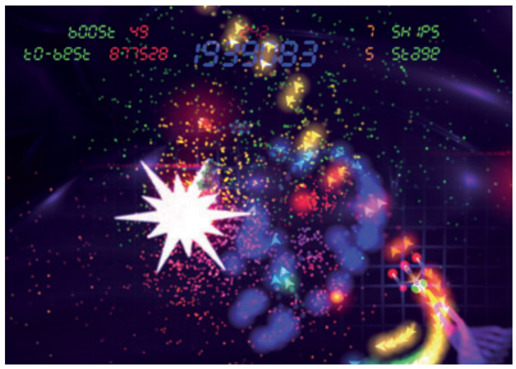
While we don't think the game is as revolutionary as *Space Giraffe*, we do think it's a fantastic shooter, and the ingenious 'Thrusty' mode, which allows you to control the thrust of the ship with the mouse, has meant we haven't been able to put it down.

» Scores

Presentation	82%
Graphics	86%
Sound	79%
Playability	91%
Addictivity	90%
Overall	**90%**



» [PC] *Gridrunner Revolution*'s look is extremely reminiscent of *Geometry Wars*.

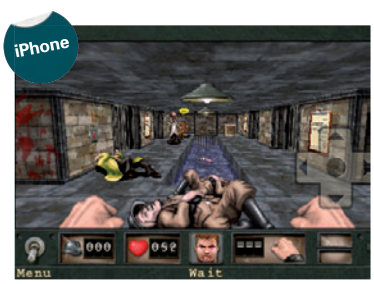


OPINION



Jeff has learnt from *Space Giraffe*, as many aspects of *Gridrunner Revolution* have been toned down. It takes a fair while to get going, but the magic is there, and while it's not a patch on *Space Giraffe*, it remains an enjoyable, distinctive shooter.

Darran Jones



Wolfenstein RPG

» **SYSTEM:** IPHONE/IPOD TOUCH
» **PRICE:** £1.79 » **PLAYERS:** 1

» **Harking back to** the original PC game, we were surprised just how action-packed and comical this turn-based RPG spin on *Wolfenstein 3D* was. This is one of the best titles to appear on Apple's handheld and contains a surprising amount of variety. And owing to the touch-screen controls suiting the turn-based nature of the game, we think it's marginally better than the 'proper' *Wolf 3D* conversion.

» Score **86%**

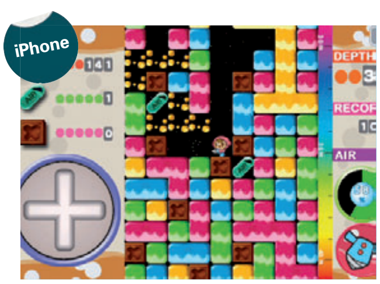


Earth vs Moon

» **SYSTEM:** IPHONE/IPOD TOUCH
» **PRICE:** £1.19 » **PLAYERS:** 1

» ***Earth vs Moon*** is a neat take on *Missile Command*, except in this version you control three defence satellites trying to protect Earth from an alien attack, plus you get to play through *Space Invaders* and *Breakout*-themed stages. With just 20 levels in the game's main story mode and a survival mode, it may be a little short, but at the same price as a Sunday paper, you can't really moan too much.

» Score **72%**



Mr Driller

» **SYSTEM:** IPHONE/IPOD TOUCH
» **PRICE:** £1.19 » **PLAYERS:** 1

» **A colourful mixture** of *Boulder Dash* and *Dig Dug*, *Mr Driller* finds a colourful chap trying to bore his way through various colour bricks while trying not to run out of air or get squished by falling blocks. It's pretty tense stuff, and the game's transition to the iPhone has been handled well. With great visuals, plus a choice of three control styles and three modes, we fully recommend the purchase.

» Score **83%**



Super Star Wars

» **SYSTEM:** VIRTUAL CONSOLE
» **PRICE:** 800 POINTS » **PLAYERS:** 1

» **The Super Nintendo** Lightsaber-ing classic finally makes its way to Virtual Console this month, so has the wait been worth it? Well, while *Super Star Wars* is still enjoyable to play today, we'd forgotten how bloody challenging it is – maybe we've just become wusses in our old age. Thankfully, help is at hand in the form of the VC's handy save game feature, which eases the frustration a notch.

» Score **84%**

Invincible Tiger: The Legend Of Han Tao

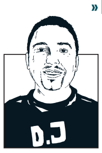
BLITZ ARCADE REVITALISES THE SCROLLING FIGHTER

» **FEATURED SYSTEM:** XBLA » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** PS3 » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
» **PRICE:** 800 POINTS » **PUBLISHER:** NAMCO » **DEVELOPER:** BLITZ ARCADE » **PLAYERS:** 1-2

XBLA



» [Live Arcade] Certain objects can be interacted with and can be either used to escape or attack your foes.



D.J

Nowadays the scrolling fighter genre is seen as a running joke, with many of the efforts that do get released being flabby brawlers in naff 3D engines. Sure, you'll get the odd uncharacteristically good effort like *Castle Crashers*, but they're few and far between.

With the recent remake of *Turtles In Time* failing to excite us, we've found solace in this wonderfully polished effort by Blitz Arcade. The big draw of *Invincible Tiger* is that it's the world's first 'proper' 3D videogame, utilising the same technology seen in today's big-budget films. It's bloody convincing as well, giving a wonderful sense of scale and depth that adds massively to *Invincible Tiger*'s immersion.

Of course, many gamers won't have these new-fangled TVs, but fortunately, *Invincible Tiger* doesn't need them as the game is perfectly playable without the additional glasses, although you can use the old anaglyphic glasses if you have any lying around.



A pastiche of the kung fu movies of old, *Invincible Tiger* works because Blitz Arcade has kept everything nice and simple. Levels are often multi-tiered and several screens wide, with each stage consisting of waves that see you getting attacked by ever-stronger opponents. As a result, the action is kept fast and furious and is backed up by an accessible combo system. It gets tired pretty quickly and is let down by some annoying difficulty spikes, but it remains effortlessly entertaining while it lasts.

OPINION



S.H

Unlike Darran, I wasn't too impressed with *Invincible Tiger.* It all felt rather bland to me, and I found the frequent difficulty spikes far too frustrating. The visual style is entertaining and the 3D is a nice touch that we're likely to see more of, but I was expecting a whole lot more.

Stuart Hunt

» Scores

Presentation	76%
Graphics	80%
Sound	74%
Playability	72%
Addictivity	60%

Overall 72%

DS





» [DS] While there are plenty of bosses in *Super Star Ultra*, they're not exactly challenging.

Kirby Super Star Ultra

NOT ULTRA, BUT STILL PRETTY GOOD

» **FEATURED SYSTEM:** DS » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** N/A » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
» **PRICE:** £34.99 » **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO » **DEVELOPER:** HAL LABORATORY » **PLAYERS:** 1-2



D.J

Say what you like about Nintendo, but it certainly knows how to get the best out of its franchises. Take *Kirby Super Star Ultra*, for example. It's effectively a remake of the SNES's *Kirby Super Star*, but it's been put together with so much care and polish that many will simply mistake it for a brand new *Kirby* game.

Super Star Ultra combines a variety of *Mario Party*-styled mini-games with traditional platforming to create a pretty well-rounded, if ridiculously easy, package. The mini-games typically pit you against three other Kirbys and range from simply shooting targets to eating food and avoiding bugs on a never-ending conveyor belt. Fun, if a little throwaway, they're all stylus-controlled and suit the mini-game structure of the original SNES release perfectly.

The platforming sections are usually based around specific objectives and



typically consist of several short stages. Spring Breeze is nothing more than a simple introduction, while later levels like The Great Cave Offensive have you seeking out treasures in a complex cavern system. Hal has also included four new platform sections, although two of them are simply tougher variations of the SNES games.

With its delightful visuals and chirpy (read: annoying) soundtrack, *Super Star Ultra* is bound to please fans of the series. It's a little too easy for our liking, though, and we'd like to see something original from Hal for Kirby's next outing.

OPINION



S.H

Is it just me, or is *Kirby* starting to feel rather tiresome? Maybe it's because Nintendo seems content to market him to youngsters, but the DS adventures since *Canvas Curse* have felt rather average. Remake or not, this is just Hal going through the motions. Very disappointing.

Stuart Hunt

» Scores

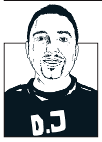
Presentation	80%
Graphics	82%
Sound	69%
Playability	70%
Addictivity	65%

Overall 70%

Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2

LESS GORE, BUT FAR MORE FUN

» **FEATURED SYSTEM:** PS3 » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** N/A » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
» **PRICE:** £39.99 » **PUBLISHER:** TECMO KOEI » **DEVELOPER:** TEAM NINJA » **PLAYERS:** 1-2



There's a whiff of hypocrisy as you start playing Tecmo's latest game. Full of violence and featuring more decapitations and severed limbs than a dozen *Saw* films put together, the lashings of purple haze that spew forth from each defeated foe do feel rather pointless. There is still blood, of course, but it's been toned down greatly since the original 360 game, even though the action feels far more frenetic than before.

The camera can still cause issues, but *Ninja Gaiden*'s combat mechanics remain unmatched by any other game and they've been refined brilliantly for *Sigma 2*. This is more than a simple retread, however, as Tecmo has added numerous extras to ensure that Ryu Hayabusa's latest outing is worth playing, even if you were man enough to complete the original. There are several new boss battles – including an epic tussle with an animated Statue of Liberty – additional levels for several new female characters, and the difficulty level has been greatly reduced. A two-player mission mode is also available, which works surprisingly well. Add in enhanced graphics, a handy pointer for whenever you get stuck and not needing keys to open doors, and *Sigma 2* feels far more focused.

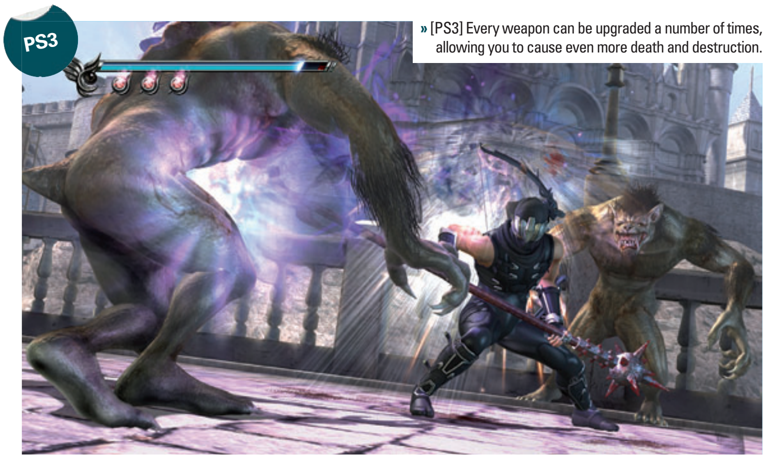
It has lost a number of elements – exploding shurikens, fewer enemies on screen, costumes – and some will no doubt hate the restructured difficulty level and toned-down gore, but *Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2* remains an exciting videogame experience that every gamer should try.

» Scores

Presentation	88%
Graphics	91%
Sound	75%
Playability	90%
Addictivity	80%

Overall 86%

PS3



» [PS3] Every weapon can be upgraded a number of times, allowing you to cause even more death and destruction.



OPINION



I can't make my mind up about this. While it's admittedly far easier, it now feels a little too basic. The combat remains greatly enjoyable, but it's always been the unflinching challenge, even back on the NES, that appealed to me.

Stuart Hunt

PSP



Blood Bowl

» **SYSTEM:** PSP
» **PRICE:** £29.99 » **PLAYERS:** 1-2

» **Fans of the** ageing Games Workshop board game will be pleased to discover that this is the most faithful adaptation of the game they're ever likely to play. Everyone else will discover a tricky to master turn-based strategy game that appears to have an unfair insistence on random events ending your turn. Persevere, however, and you may come to like it just as much as we do.

» Score **76%**

PSP



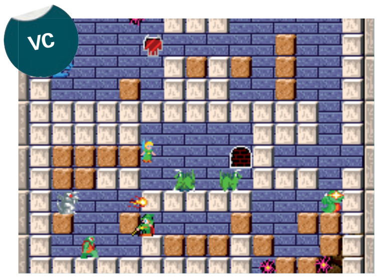
Gran Turismo

» **SYSTEM:** PSP
» **PRICE:** £24.99 » **PLAYERS:** 1

» **Well this is** different. The career mode is absent, the ability to continually tweak your car is pared down and you only ever race against three other vehicles. Despite this apparent step back, the long-overdue *Gran Turismo* works surprisingly well on Sony's handheld, proving perfect for bite-sized play sessions. Visually solid, its 35 tracks and 800 cars mean you're still getting plenty for your money.

» Score **78%**

VC



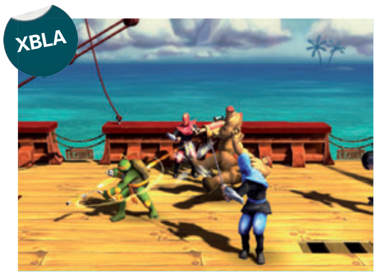
Solomon's Key

» **SYSTEM:** VIRTUAL CONSOLE
» **PRICE:** 500 POINTS » **PLAYERS:** 1

» **We love *Solomon's Key*,** and while the NES version is already available on the Virtual Console, the arcade original is far better. Simple in concept – reach the exit by using your wand to make certain blocks disappear and reappear – it's hellishly addictive and has aged extremely well. The difficulty goes through the roof on the later stages, but its paltry price point means this is not to be missed.

» Score **85%**

XBLA



TMNT: Turtles In Time: Re-Shelled

» **SYSTEM:** XBLA
» **PRICE:** 800 POINTS » **PLAYERS:** 1-4

» **Maybe we're just** getting old, but this update of the classic Konami title lacks the charm of the original. Yes, it's slick and has additional cut-scenes and fun Achievements, but we're not fans of the new art style nor the fact that it's not based on the superb SNES update. Still fun with three other players, it's otherwise a tiresome solo experience.

» Score **63%**

RETRORATED

» TEKKEN 6

INFORMATION

- » **FEATURED SYSTEM:** PLAYSTATION 3
- » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** XBOX 360
- » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- » **PRICE:** £49.99
- » **PUBLISHER:** NAMCO BANDAI
- » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
- » **PLAYERS:** 1-2

BRIEF HISTORY

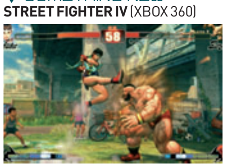
» With each arcade instalment said to be based on PlayStation hardware, *Tekken* was a killer app for Sony consoles. Namco's seminal 3D fighting game – the one without weapons – went toe-to-toe with Sega's *Virtua Fighter* and went on to make appearances on every piece of Sony hardware released.

WHY NOT TRY

▼ SOMETHING OLD
TEKKEN 3 (PSONE)



▽ SOMETHING NEW
STREET FIGHTER IV (XBOX 360)



✱ GO DEEPER

The facts behind Tekken 6

» *Tekken* is Ed (*Mortal Kombat*) Boone's favourite fighting game

» A possible *Virtua Fighter*/*Tekken* crossover is rumoured to be on the cards.

PS3



» [PS3] *Tekken 6* features over 40 characters and plenty of varied and impressive move sets.

IS TEKKEN'S LATEST ANY OLD IRON?

Tekken 6

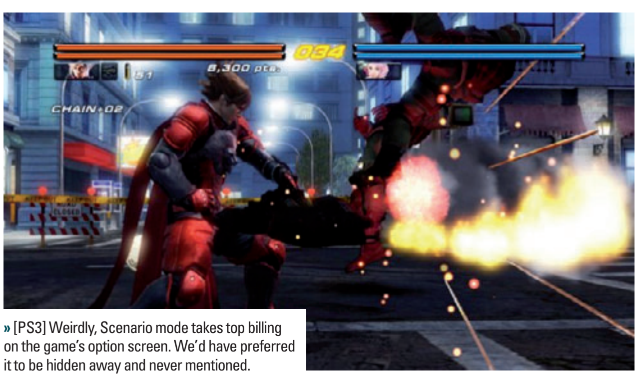


It's a shame *Tekken* fails to pack the same punch it did many Iron Fist Tournaments ago. Perhaps the reason why the series' popularity has waned in recent years is principally down to the fact that it remains the exact same game it was when it first arrived on the scene in 1994. Indeed, save for a Rage bar, which kicks in when you have a sliver of health left and works by increasing the power of your attacks to help you turn a fight around – though we found that it kicks in far too late to actually be effective – the traditional *Tekken* gameplay remains untouched in this latest iteration. Stabbing the four face buttons still makes one of the characters' four limbs do something, punching at the face buttons makes a character effortlessly string together satisfying lines of attacks, and the game's Iron Fist Tournament stills culminates in a hair-pulling jippy end boss fight. In fact, *Tekken 6* features the undisputed king of jippy end boss fights: a Zoid-resembling creation called Azazel that makes *Street Fighter IV*'s Seth feel inspired by comparison.

So what about the rest of the game? Well, the action itself remains as solid and enjoyable as ever. *Tekken 6* not only looks astonishing but also features a fulsome roster of varied characters – fully open from the start – made up of the best fighters from past games, plus six new faces – Leo, Zafina, Bob, Miguel, Lars (a new Mishima) and Alisa – that slot into the canon brilliantly. It also comes packed with a couple of extra modes too – some good, some not so good. There's Scenario mode, which is basically just another version of Tekken Force/Devil Within that finds Lars and Alisa inside a hilariously bad 3D fighting game, plus a customisation mode that allows you to dress up your fighters in glasses and ponytails with your fight purse, but sadly this isn't very good either as everything on sale is wildly overpriced. The best two modes on offer are easily the Team Battle and Ghost mode. The latter is a neat pick-and-play career mode thing that finds you climbing the ranks by fighting variants of the main characters with names like xxLaryBomb. And while we might sound like we're mocking it, it's actually a brilliant and easy way to hone and improve your skills before taking the fight to your pals or the online community.



» [PS3] *Tekken 6* features interactive environs, à la *Dead Or Alive*, including a stage where you can kick pigs and sheep into the air.



» [PS3] Weirdly, Scenario mode takes top billing on the game's option screen. We'd have preferred it to be hidden away and never mentioned.

OPINION



It doesn't manage to steal *Street Fighter IV*'s crown, but *Tekken 6* makes a good attempt. The new characters are varied and interesting, new move sets ensure that you'll return to old favourites, and visually it looks stunning. It's just a shame the Scenario mode brings the package down a notch or two.

Darran Jones

In a nutshell

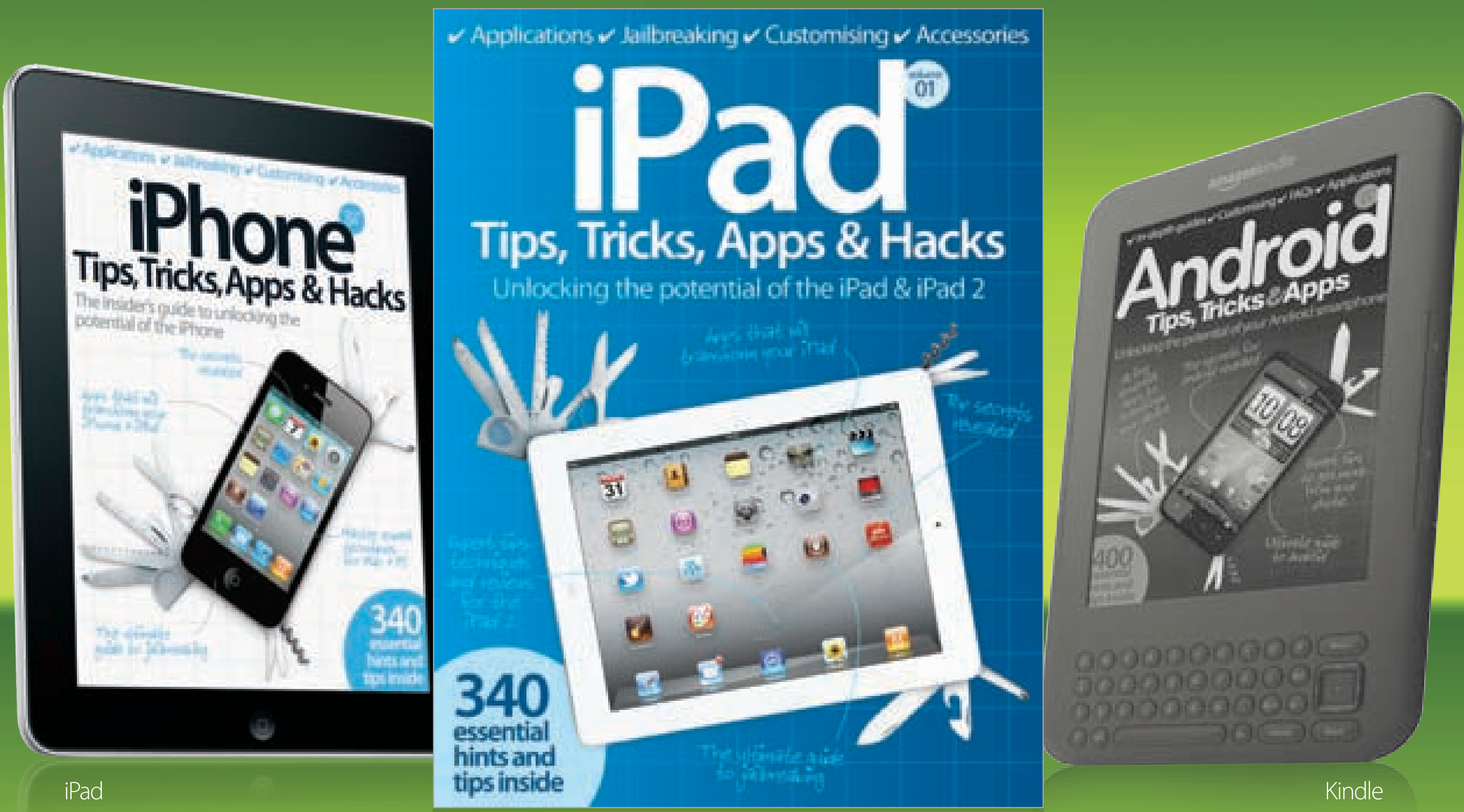
***Tekken* certainly hasn't lost its charm and remains one of the best 3D fighting games around. It's just a shame that it has a few annoying and rushed-feeling elements preventing it from being a true classic.**

» Scores

Presentation	70%
Graphics	90%
Sound	85%
Playability	89%
Addictivity	85%

Overall 83%

We don't keep secrets



iPad

Kindle

Printed full colour large format book

Tips & Tricks™

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HOMEBREW

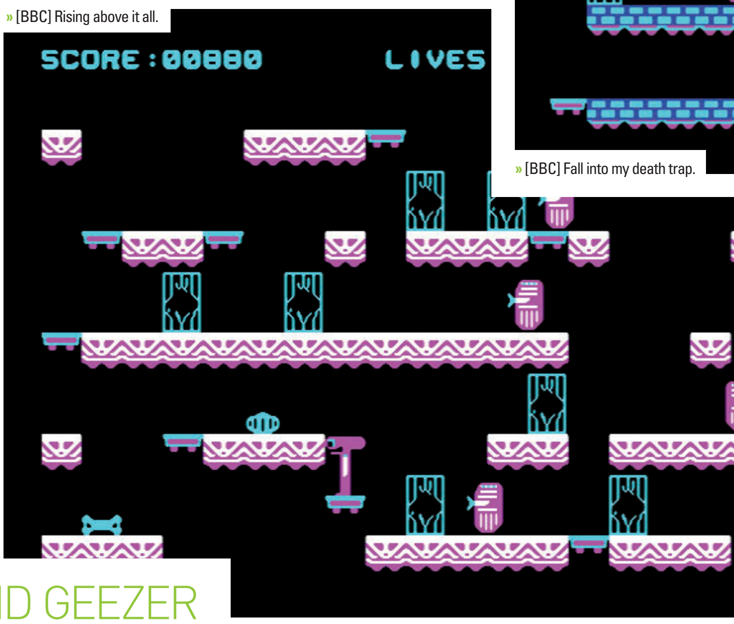
» The scene's latest news and reviews



At Retro Reunited in September, I had the bizarre experience of being interviewed on camera. One of the questions was, essentially, 'Why write code for 8-bit computers?' and I expect the answer I gave, 'Because it's a challenge to get a good game together', is pretty much what every coder would have said. The only difference being that I looked like a startled bunny while saying it...



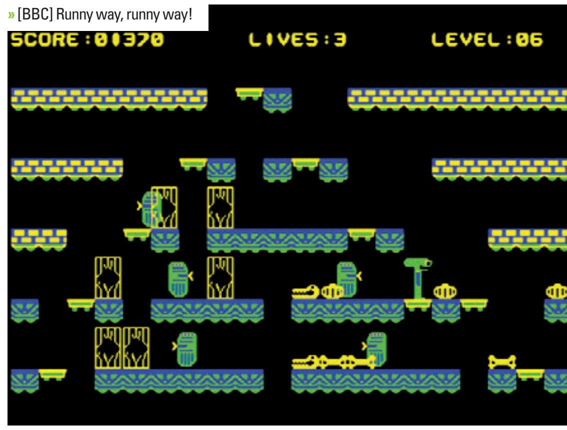
» [BBC] Rising above it all.





» [BBC] Fall into my death trap.

» [BBC] Runny way, runny way!



retro GAMER SIZZLER

HE'S A DIAMOND GEEZER

THE KRYSTAL CONNECTION



FORMAT: BBC MICRO
DEVELOPED BY: STEVEN SMITH
LINK: WWW.RETROSOFTWARE.CO.UK
RELEASE DATE: 2009
PRICE: £2.50 (CASSETTE), £3.50 (DISK)
REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK

The planet Mars, at one point thought by mankind to be nothing more than a barren rock hanging in space, has rather surprisingly turned out to be populated. The indigenous life forms, which presumably spend their lives underground or else NASA is going to be facing some serious allegations regarding its Mars exploration projects, have spindly bodies and limbs, topped by a bulbous, flattened head with large eyes and a slightly goofy expression. And you should know, because as the star of *The Krystal Connection*, you're one of them – one of the bravest, in fact. So when the energy source that powers the life support systems for your entire planet is stolen by evil, profiteering humans and transported to Earth, it's you who everybody else stuffs into a rocket to send after it.

The Power Krystal has been squirreled away somewhere in an archaeological dig, which in turn has automated defences in place, although why this arrangement was preferable to perhaps a fortress of some kind populated with well-armed minions we'll probably never find out. Getting through each of the 12 areas of the dig involves avoiding security hardware while collecting the various artefacts that are lying about the place, which serves the humans right: they steal an energy crystal and their fossils get nicked in return! The robot guards can be immobilised by placing what appears to be a mechanical trap that springs up to form a cage around them – although the bars only last a finite amount of time before succumbing to abuse from heavy duty pincers – and really they're as daft as brushes because if they 'sense' that the Martian is on their floor, they'll turn and trundle relentlessly towards him and straight into his trap. They'll even move right up to the edge of a platform and stare soullessly across the void when they can't go any further.

As with Retro Software's previous release *Zap!*, *The Krystal Connection* was written during the Eighties but remained unpublished. This release takes the most up-to-date version of programmer Steven Smith's code and, along with a few cosmetic changes, grafts on a level password system and patches some issues that affected its use with the BBC Master series. While the choice of colours on some of the screens could be considered slightly overpowering and a couple of the 12 levels included have particularly frustrating areas within them, the puzzles in *The Krystal Connection* are well thought out and it's easy to see why Smith even got to the point where he and a representative of Melbourne House had exchanged contracts. It was worth publishing then and still holds the attention now as a solid combination of action game and puzzles, neatly packaged on just about every media that a BBC owner could conceivably want.

Oh, and as a quick note to everyone at Retro Software: yes, I noticed in the instructions that the Krystal was "stolen by the evil Commodius". Very amusing, lads.

90%

NEW GAMES NEEDED

If you have a homebrew project you would like to see featured then please contact us at:
retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk

BOXWORLD 2

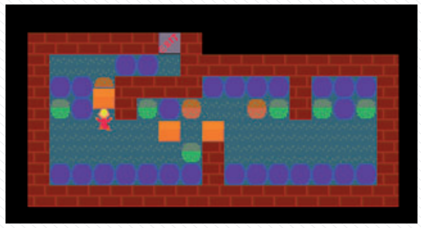
REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK

» **FORMAT:** AMIGA » **DEVELOPER:** VENTZISLAV TZVETKOV
» **DOWNLOAD:** HIRUDOV.COM » **PRICE:** FREE

The original *Boxworld* was a straight clone of *Sokoban*, which was converted to various platforms over the years by developer Ventzislav Tzvetkov. But this sequel, currently only available for the Amiga and Windows-based PCs, changes the objective drastically. The boxes can still only be pushed if there's space on the far side for them to move into – and some will only stop moving once they bump into something else or fall into a hole – but they no longer need organising and instead act as obstructions, blocking the player's route to the exit.

The levels are challenging, and *Boxworld* needs considerable forethought and planning, but with no timer to worry about, staring at the boxes until they're burnt into the retina as each possible move is mulled over is the order of the day, and there's a large number of challenges to keep lateral thinkers busy for quite a while.

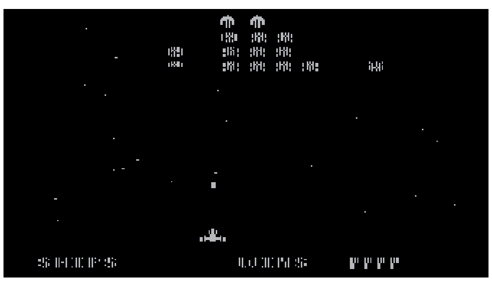
81%





» [Amiga] When push comes to shove.





» [Atari 8-bit] Not the best graphics the Atari has seen...

GALAXIAN

REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK

» **FORMAT:** ATARI 8-BIT » **DEVELOPER:** KRZYSZTOF DUDEK
» **DOWNLOAD:** TINYURL.COM/YZCZAGD » **PRICE:** FREE

Krzysztof 'xxl' Dudek has spent the last couple of years building himself something of a reputation as the Atari 8-bit conversion king, having ported, among other titles, *Hobgoblin* and *Jet Set Willy* directly from the original BBC and Spectrum code. This version of *Galaxian* is the latest in that growing roster of ports and is based on an Apple II implementation from 1981, although it's a little difficult to see why…

While the game itself is simple but at least worth an hour or perhaps even two of the average shoot-'em-up fan's playing time, the graphics, which are presumably relying on the way that Apple II displays tended to produce colour 'artefacts', and sound have pretty much been converted directly, producing some indistinct objects where the Galaxians should be and an accompanying soundtrack comprised of pops and farts. With Atari's own conversion being superior in just about every respect, it's difficult to recommend this port for anything apart from perhaps the novelty value.

47%

LAST AMAZON TRILOGY

REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK

» **FORMAT:** COMMODORE 64 » **DEVELOPER:** ALF YNGVE
» **DOWNLOAD:** WWW.PSYTRONIK.COM » **PRICE:** VARIOUS

The stories behind the three games in the *Last Amazon* trilogy revolve around a young UNICEF worker, administering aid in remote areas and finding herself face to face with drug dealers. Since our unnamed heroine has no way to summon help, she takes on the drug lord and his henchmen alone, leading to a series of pitched battles in scrolling jungles, deserts and townships.

The original two *Last Amazon* games were released by Psytronik in the Nineties and designer Alf Yngve produced some first-rate graphics for them. The new enhancements and power-ups that have been installed by programmer Shaun Coleman add an extra dimension to a couple of already playable titles, and the trilogy has been rounded off by the addition of a recently created re-imagining of the first *Last Amazon*, this time using horizontal scrolling, that is also agreeable to play. Don't expect an easy time, though, because it really is a jungle out there.

87%





» [C64] Do UNICEF workers do this regularly?

WHAT'S BREWING?

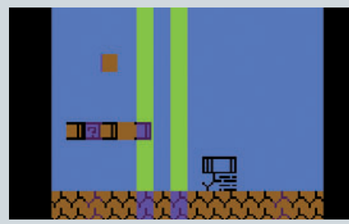
All the latest news from the homebrew community



» [C64] Neoow, dagga dagga dagga!

» Going up

Another issue, another plug for my own stuff… This time it's *GR9 Strike Force*, a horizontally scrolling shoot-'em-up where a GR9 Harrier must be flown over enemy territory, taking down air and ground defences along the way. The 'party version' was released at Retro Reunited – a full release is planned soon, published by Psytronik – and can be downloaded from **cosine.org.uk** by anyone who fancies pretending they're in *Top Gun*.



» [Atari 8-bit] Caution: this is a hard hat area.

» Going down

Analmux, one of the AtariAge regulars, has started a conversion that is rather exciting: he's taking a disassembly of the NES version of *Super Mario Bros* and persuading it to play nicely with the Atari 8-bit! At this extremely early stage there's very little to show and it's just a scrolling routine with either test or placeholding graphics, but if this goes to plan it could be pretty spectacular.



» Going boom!

With a name like *Robotron: 6128*, we don't even need to spell anything out, but just for the record, it's a version of arena-shooting stalwart *Robotron: 2084* but for the Amstrad CPC6128, and is anyone taking bets on how much a certain editor will be grinning just at the thought? Next month we'll give the *Robotrons* some serious attention, but until then the disk image can be downloaded at **mameemu.com/robotron/index.htm**

HOMEBREW

» The scene's latest news and reviews

WHAT'S BREWING?

All the latest news from the homebrew community

» Hey, you guys!

The original game version of Steven Spielberg's *The Goonies* invited players to help Mikey, Chunk and Mouth as they attempted to outwit the vicious Fratelli family before tackling the various hazards and booby traps laid by One-Eyed Willy, all of which required quite a bit of thinking considering the action-oriented movie on which it was based. The new remake, announced recently over at the Retro Remakes message board along with a work in progress video, looks to be taking that original, thought-provoking adventure and renovating the sound and graphics.



» [PC] Looking for One-Eyed Willy!

» Push me, pull you

Since *Boxworld 2* wasn't a straight rendition of *Sokoban*, here's another, more traditional adaptation. *SokoBASIC* has been developed in FreeBASIC, which it also requires to run, since it's only released as a single source code file, and is currently still in the testing stages. If anyone fancies using the included editor to build some levels that could be shipped with the final game, the developer would like a chat at: **retroremakes.com/forum/index.php/topic,1017.msg18713.html**

FLASH BOREDOM

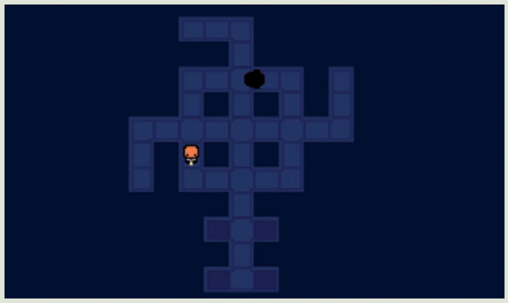


Want to know how to while away those boring office hours? Then don't miss out on **Retro Gamer**'s Flash game of the month. This month we look at **8 Bit Junkie.**

THE SPACE INVADERS ARE coming and only one man can stop them… Pac-Man! Guide the spherical scoffer around space with a mouse and help him gobble up as many of the brightly coloured attackers there as he can – but avoid consuming red aliens, as they'll be subtracted from Pac's score.

www.e4.com/game/8-bit-junkie/play.e4

REMAKES WE'VE BEEN PLAYING...



LIGHTS OUT



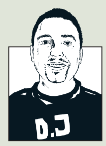
» DOWNLOAD: RETROREMAKES.COM/FORUM/INDEX.PHP/TOPIC,1001

This game is dark… literally. Although you can make out things as silhouettes, there's no hint as to what they might be unless you turn on your torch. They could be rats scuttling around in the gloom, the keys you'll need to unlock passageways leading to the exit, people in need of rescuing, or it could be something far more sinister…

Lights Out generates atmosphere with its ominous sounds and darkened corridors, the floor plans of which are cunning, if slightly unfair in places. But for goodness' sake, don't play if you've got a heart condition because, as something of a sensitive creature myself, *Lights Out* had me screaming like a little girl – imagine the hair in pigtails – at least once a level.



TETRIPONG

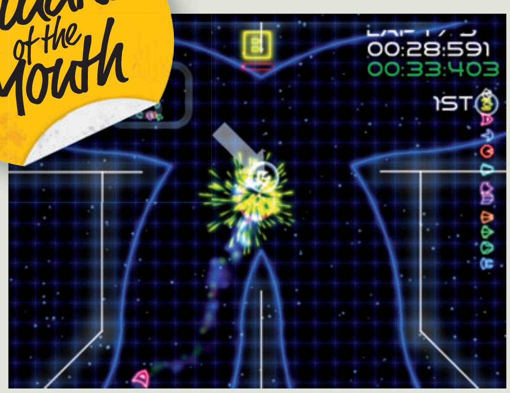


» DOWNLOAD: JAYENKAI.SOCODER.NET/2009/08/Y2W2-TETRIPONG/

Anyone who plays lots of homebrew likes the odd game of *Tetris* – well, there are a lot to choose from, so it at least helps if you enjoy them – and probably isn't immune to the charms of *Breakout* either… but what happens when those two worlds collide?

In *Tetripong*, pieces descend into the well and need positioning to create lines, but at the same time the entire playfield is slowly being eroded by a number of balls, which can be selected from the options, that bounce around the screen. This new element changes things drastically, as now lines need to be formed as quickly as possible to avoid bits of them being chipped away. It's amazing what a difference this single design change makes and how engaging it is to play with it.

Remake of the Month





» [PC] That's what you get for dodgy driving!

SUPER LASER RACER



» DOWNLOAD: WWW.NEWSTARSOCCER.COM/SLR.HTML

There's something about the future that, regardless of how utopian it may seem, some bright spark always comes up with the idea of taking an existing sport and arming the competitors to the teeth. *Super Laser Racer* has no plans to buck that trend, with its participants controlling highly manoeuvrable craft as they swerve recklessly around hairpin bends, narrowly avoid collisions at crossroads and spend most of the race trying to put the boot in wherever possible using the lasers, mines, plasma cannons and other weapons provided by the race organisers.

There are four tournaments – three with four tracks apiece, and a world tour that takes in everywhere visited previously. The tracks themselves are two-dimensional, viewed from above and composed of tricky intersections, nasty corners, weapon pods, boost pads, and there is always at least one recharging point where the racers can draw in some power for their shields. With the glowing vectors, primary colour and glorious pyrotechnics, *Super Laser Racer* could have been *Geometry Wars: Racing*. The difficulty is pitched about right, the computer-controlled racers are credible opponents, and the soundtrack gets the adrenaline pumping. A decent package for under £8.









» **Above:** *Beyond Evil* is coming to the Atari 8-bit.
» **Right:** *Gridrunner* is a remake of the 1982 Llamasoft title.

HOMEBREW HEROES

HERE AT **RETRO GAMER** WE'RE FANS OF OLD GAMES – YOU'D NEVER HAVE GUESSED, WOULD YOU? SO WHEN SEASONED CODER KAROLJ NADJ FIRST CONVERTED JEFF MINTER'S VIC-20 CLASSIC METAGALACTIC LLAMAS BATTLE AT THE EDGE OF TIME OVER TO THE ATARI 8-BIT AND THEN STARTED WORK ON CONVERTING GRIDRUNNER, WE FOUND HIM RATHER INTERESTING...

Retro Gamer: So, what was it that first drew you into programming games for the 8-bits?
Karolj Nadj: When I got my VIC-20 I could not resist when I typed in listings… There was some magic in the listings that whispered to me, 'Yes, you can!'

RG: And what are some of the challenges that you feel are presented by developing for the Atari 8-bit computers in particular?
KN: Right now the most challenging is the sprite system when doing conversions from platforms using hardware sprites such as the MSX, NES or C64…

RG: We know that you're already working full-time in development within the mainstream games industry, so what drives you to work on homebrew 8-bit games in your own time in addition to your day job?
KN: Fun, fun, fun, and the magic of the 'RISC CPU' 6502. There is a strange magic lying in the 160x200x4 pixel resolution that I cannot resist…

RG: You have quite a range of ported titles to your name. What are the differences between converting those existing games and developing your own from scratch?
KN: Creating your own IP is a challenging, time-consuming task, especially when trying to do an action role-playing game based on *Diablo*, so getting fast rewards and quicker feedback for your own motivation is served by taking existing games and getting them to run on another machine. So actually I am doing more a kind of emulation.

For example, the Jeff Minter games are running in a VIC-20 'sandbox', where the Atari 8-bit is simulating various aspects of the VIC while keeping the game mechanic as authentic as possible. Simply speaking, the original code Jeff wrote is running.

HIGH FIVE
The homebrew games Stuart can't live without

1. **Tempest Extreme** (Atlantis Games Group, Atari 8-bit) Well done Jaguar conversion. Even the soundtrack…
2. **Bomb Jack** (GR8 Software, Atari 8-bit) Sadly the A8 never got an official *Bomb Jack*, but this kicks ass and is based on the arcade version's graphics.
3. **Reaxion** (Cosine, Atari 8-bit) This isn't bad for Cosine's first work on the Atari 8-bit.
4. **Crownland** (Piotr Wisniewski, Atari 8-bit) Started as "the A8 can do *Mario* games, too" and is very well done. Nice graphics and good playability, but unfortunately a little bit short so we're still waiting for the full version.
5. **Flowers Mania** (Krzysztof Dudek, Atari 8-bit) Another nicely polished production with a brilliant soundtrack by Miker. I often play it just because of the music.

RG: Of the games you've been involved with, what are the ones you feel worked out the best?
KN: Do you mean the old ones from the Eighties or the new babies? Actually the moment I was most proud was playing *Metagalactic Llamas Battle At The Edge Of Time* on the Atari 8-bit, as this was my all-time VIC favourite in the Eighties. I love you, Jeff!

RG: And apart from your ongoing projects, is there anything else you'd like to either write or port that hasn't been done yet?
KN: There are still some VIC gems that are definitely better on the VIC than on other platforms in my opinion: *Submarine Commander*, *Omega Race* or the Tom Griner games, just to name a couple.

RG: Where do you think the homebrew community's popularity comes from?
KN: Retro is cool. The thirtysomethings are now in the situation where they can afford all of the other machines, and PCs are fast enough to emulate so you can get your hands on so many different platforms from the past: the C64, Vectrex, 2600, Colecovision and so on. And along with having all the knowledge from 20 years of cross development, a lot of powerful tools are easily available to get started easily.

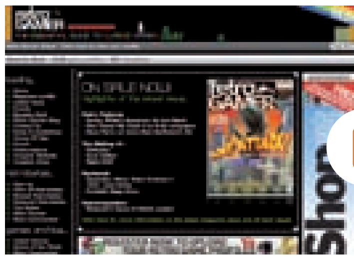
RG: And finally, what are you working on right now?
KN: *Gridrunner* and my action RPG *Beyond Evil*, both for the Atari 8-bit.

BARGAIN HUNT

DESPERATE TO FINISH OFF YOUR RETRO COLLECTION? WANT TO GET YOUR HANDS ON ALL THE BEST BARGAINS BUT DON'T KNOW WHERE TO GO? THEN VISIT **WWW.RETROGAMER.NET/BARGAIN_HUNT.PHP** AND DISCOVER ALL THE CLASSIC MACHINES THAT YOU'LL EVER NEED

You've been asking for it forever, but we're pleased to announce a brand new look for **Retro Gamer**'s Buyer's Guide section that makes it incredibly easy to get your hands on all the best retro bargains.

Using our new search engine couldn't be easier. All you need to do is select a manufacturer and machine from the pull-down menu. Once you've found the system you're after, the magic of the internet will search eBay for the top 20 ending items, meaning that you'll be able to gauge the market's health with very little effort. This month, Stuart's been looking at NES collections



Head on over to the excellent **www.retrogamer.net** and click on 'Bargain Hunt' or visit **www.retrogamer.net/bargain_hunt.php**



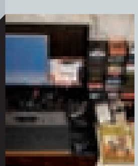
Put in the details for the greatest computer in the world and discuss with your staff writer why it's so much better than the ZX Spectrum.



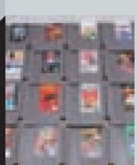
Swoon in delight as you find yourself getting ever closer to collecting all the £1.99 *Simulator* games that Codemasters ever released.

eBAY BARGAINS

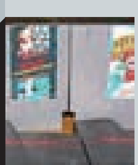
Retro Gamer has been scouring the world's most popular auction site to find the best bargains out there…



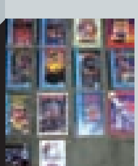
■ Atari 2600 Collection
While you'd be forgiven for thinking that $71 is steep for a 2600, with all its accessories and 53 games you can't grumble that much.



■ NES Games Collection
Anyone looking to beef up their NES collection would have seen this lot of 24 NES games, going for $20.50.



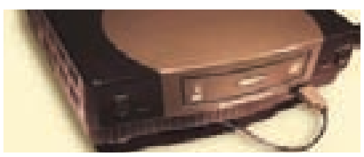
■ Super Mario Bros NES Collection
A nice little *Mario* collection, this one: four NES *Mario* games, plus the original. Snapped up for $15.50.



■ Mega-CD Collection
This great collection of Mega-CD games, which included some of the best titles released for the machine, was a steal at $30.99.

3DO

3DO GOLDSTAR	**£45+ ($81+)**
PANASONIC FZ-1 (FRONT LOADER)	**£40+ ($74+)**
PANASONIC FZ-10 (TOP LOADER)	**£20+ ($37+)**



ACORN

ARCHIMEDES	**£30 ($55)**
ATOM	**£50 ($92)**
ELECTRON	**£10 ($18)**
BBC MICRO	**£15 ($28)**



AMSTRAD

CPC 464	**£10+ ($18+)**
CPC 664	**£90+ ($165+)**
CPC 6128	**£25+ ($46+)**
GX4000	**£50+ ($92+)**

APPLE

APPLE II	**£30+ ($55+)**

ATARI

400/800/600XL/XE	**£20+ ($37+)**
2600 (VCS)	**£20+ ($37+)**
5200	**£30 ($55)**
7800	**£20+ ($37+)**
JAGUAR	**£20+ ($37+)**
JAGUAR CD	**£70 ($129)**
LYNX I/II	**£20+ ($37+)**
ST	**£20+ ($37+)**

BANDAI

GUNDAM RX-78	**£75+ ($138+)**
PLAYDIA	**£90 ($166)**
PIPPIN (ATMARK)	**£500+ ($921+)**
WONDERSWAN	**£10 ($18)**
WONDERSWAN COLOR	**£20 ($37)**
WONDERSWAN CRYSTAL	**£25 ($46)**



COMMODORE

AMIGA 500/600/1200	**£20+ ($37+)**
C16/PLUS/4	**£15+ ($28+)**
C64	**£10+ ($18+)**
C64 GS	**£30+ ($55+)**
C128	**£30+ ($55+)**
CDTV	**£20 ($37)**
CD32	**£25 ($46)**
VIC-20	**£10+ ($18+)**



FUJITSU

FUJITSU FM	**£100+ ($184+)**
FUJITSU FM TOWNS MARTY	**£200+ ($368+)**



MISCELLANEOUS

BALLY ASTROCADE	**£20 ($37)**
BARCODE BATTLER	**£5 ($18)**
CASIO LOOPY	**£25 ($46)**
FAIRCHILD CHANNEL F	**£10 ($18)**
COLECOVISION	**£30 ($55)**
DRAGON 32/64	**£8 ($15)**
ARCADIA 2001	**£10 ($18)**
EPOCH CASSETTE VISION	**£20 ($37)**
EPOCH SUPER CASSETTE VISION	**£30 ($55)**
INTELLIVISION	**£40+ ($74+)**
ODYSSEY	**£10 ($18)**
ORIC-1	**£20 ($37)**
PLAYSTATION	**£10 ($18)**
SAM COUPÉ	**£50-£200 ($92-$368)**
SUPERVISION	**£15 ($28)**
TIGER ELEC GAME.COM	**£15 ($28)**
TOMY TUTOR (MK1/JR/MK2)	**£10 ($18)**
VECTREX (MB/GCE)	**£80 ($147)**
X68000	**£90+ ($166+)**

MSX

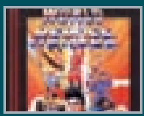
MSX 1	**£10+ ($18+)**
MSX 2	**£20+ ($37+)**
MSX 2+	**£30+ ($55+)**
MSX TURBO R	**£30+ ($55+)**

NEC

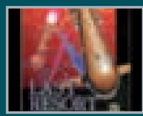
PC-6###	**£10+ ($18+)**

RETRO AUCTION WATCH

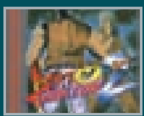
Retro Gamer sifts through the pages of eBay to report back on any items of interest, hardware or software that caught our eyes. This month Darran's digging through some Neo Geo classics.



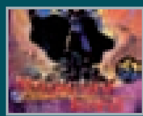
WORLD HEROES
System: **Neo Geo AES**
Normally sells for **£25**
Ended at **£17**



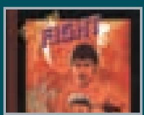
LAST RESORT
System: **Neo Geo AES**
Normally sells for **£50**
Ended at **£36.40**



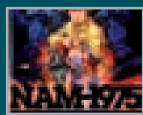
ART OF FIGHTING 2
System: **Neo Geo AES**
Normally sells for **£35**
Ended at **£47.50**



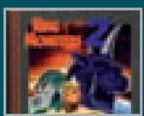
MAGICIAN LORD
System: **Neo Geo AES**
Normally sells for **£25**
Ended at **£14.90**



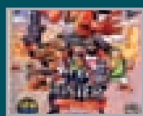
BURNING FIGHT
System: **Neo Geo AES**
Normally sells for **£20**
Ended at **£27**



NAM-1975
System: **Neo Geo AES**
Normally sells for **£20**
Ended at **£36**



KING OF THE MONSTERS 2
System: **Neo Geo AES**
Normally sells for **£25**
Ended at **£27**



TOP HUNTER
System: **Neo Geo AES**
Normally sells for **£30**
Ended at **£55**

PC-8801	**£20 ($37)**
PC-9801	**£35 ($65)**
PC-FX	**£50 ($92)**
PC-ENGINE	**£55 ($101)**
PC-ENGINE GT	**£70+ ($129+)**
TURBOGRAFX-16	**£30 ($55)**
TURBO EXPRESS	**£50 ($92)**
SUPERGRAFX	**£80 ($147)**
PC-E CD-ROM/ TURBOGRAFX CD	**£50+ ($92+)**
PC-E DUO/ TURBO DUO	**£120 ($221)**
DUO-R	**£80 ($147)**
NINTENDO	
FAMICOM	**£60 ($111)**
FAMICOM AV	**£40 ($74)**
FAMICOM DISK SYSTEM	**£70 ($129)**
SHARP FAMICOM TWIN	**£100 ($184)**
GAME & WATCH	**£1+ ($2+)**
GAME BOY B/W	**£5 ($9)**
GAME BOY POCKET	**£8 ($15)**
GAME BOY COLOR	**£12 ($22)**
GAME BOY ADVANCE	**£25 ($46)**
N64	**£10 ($18)**
N64 DD	**£150+ ($276+)**
NES (TOASTER)	**£15 ($28)**
NES (DOG BONE)	**£50 ($92)**
SNES (SUPER FAMICOM IN JAPAN)	**£20 ($37)**
SNES 2 (KNOWN AS 'JR' IN JAPAN)	**£50+ ($92+)**
VIRTUAL BOY	**£80 ($147)**



PHILIPS	
CD-I	**£20+ ($37+)**
CD-I 450/500	**£30 ($55)**
VIDEOPAC G7000	**£10 ($18)**
VIDEOPAC G7400	**£20 ($37)**
SEGA	
32X	**£35 ($65)**
DREAMCAST	**£25 ($46)**
GAME GEAR	**£15 ($28)**
SG-1000	**£50-£150 ($80-$260)**
SC-3000	**£50 ($92)**
MASTER SYSTEM I/II	**£10 ($18)**



AMSTRAD MEGA PC	**£10 ($18)**
TERADRIVE	**£100 ($184)**
MEGA DRIVE/ GENESIS I/II	**£25 ($46)**
GENESIS 3	**£35 ($65)**
NOMAD	**£100 ($184)**
MULTIMEGA/ WONDERMEGA/ CDX/X'EYE	**£100+ ($184+)**
MEGA-CD (SCD) I/II	**£50+ ($92+)**
PICO	**£20 ($37)**
SATURN	**£30 ($55)**
MEGA CD (SCD) I/II	**£50+ ($92+)**
SINCLAIR	
ZX80	**£200 ($368)**
ZX81	**£70 ($129)**
ZX SPECTRUM 48K	**£10 ($18)**
ZX SPECTRUM 128K	**£40 ($74)**
ZX SPECTRUM+	**£35 ($65)**
ZX SPECTRUM +2	**£35 ($65)**
ZX SPECTRUM +3	**£40 ($74)**
SNK	
NEO-GEO AES	**£150+ ($276+)**
NEO-GEO MVS	**£70 ($129)**
NEO-GEO CD	**£100 ($184)**
NEO-GEO CDZ	**£80+ ($147+)**
NEO-GEO POCKET	**£20 ($37)**
NEO-GEO POCKET COLOR	**£35 ($65)**

COLLECTOR'S CORNER

THIS MONTH'S COLLECTOR IS 26-YEAR-OLD BOBBY ASPIN, A BUILDER FROM LANCASHIRE WHO'S CURRENTLY CONSTRUCTING AN IMPRESSIVE RETRO COLLECTION

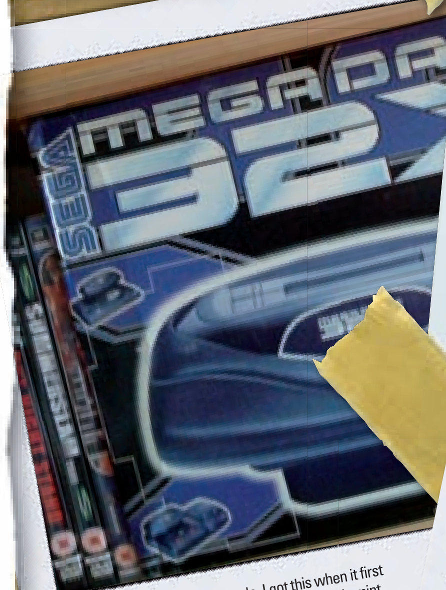




» *Virtual Hydlide* may have got terrible reviews, but I personally love it. As with everything, I keep all the boxes in mint condition. They are all originals from when I first purchased them.



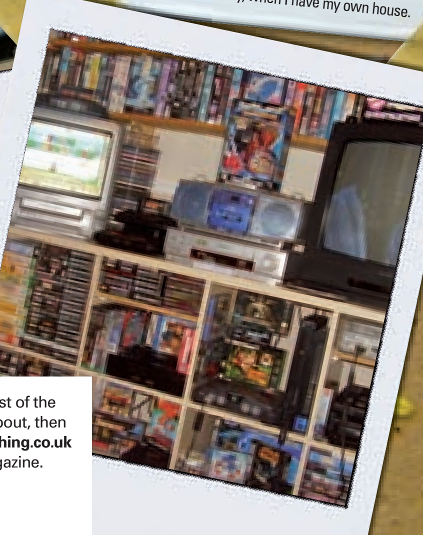
» I never even opened this and never will. I love the *Mortal Kombat* series and think this just looks smart in the box. Notice the Predator figure left!



» The 32X is my favourite console. I got this when it first came out when I was about 13. The box is still in mint condition. My 32X games are the most valuable to me.



» Here are some of my consoles; all the boxes are in mint condition. I would love to have these on display all the time. Maybe one day, when I have my own house.



If you have a collection that you feel the rest of the **Retro Gamer** readership needs to know about, then contact us at **retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk** and we'll do our best to get you in the magazine.

MAILBAG

HAVE YOUR SAY… SEND US A LETTER OR MAKE YOURSELF HEARD ON THE ONLINE FORUM – **WWW.RETROGAMER.NET**

STAR LETTER



» [Xbox 360] It looks fantastic, but James Mason still prefers the original *Wolfenstein*.

FULL CIRCLE

Dear **Retro Gamer**,

I've been playing quite a few new games lately, and it's interesting to see that many of them still aren't a patch on the decades-old versions.

I was playing *Wolfenstein* and while it looks lovely, the wanton killing left a really bad taste in my mouth. Play the original *Wolfenstein 3D* and you could see that Carmack and Romero created the game with its tongue firmly in its cheek. I just found the new *Wolfenstein* to be offensive, however, and its bland level design, identikit enemies and hokum plot did little to convince me to continue with it.

The same can be said for *Bionic Commando*, *Tomb Raider Underworld* and the new *Monkey Island*: they just aren't as good as the originals, further cementing the fact that the original games will always be considered classics.

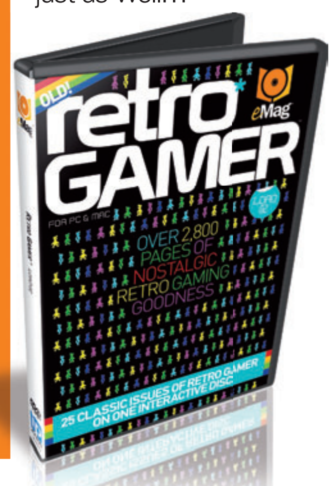
With the games industry stagnating and offering little variety, it's hardly surprising that so many developers are going back to their old licences. What is surprising, though, is just how poorly they fail to capture the spirit of the original games. It's for that reason and that reason alone why I'll never get rid of my old machines.

James Mason, Staffordshire

While we certainly agree on many of your points, James, certain aspects of new titles like *Bionic Commando* are a huge improvement over what came before. You're right, though: the industry does appear to be stagnating, and while there are some truly great games around, there's also a worrying amount of utter tosh. Have an eMag for your troubles.

WIN!

Every month, one lucky reader will receive a copy of our brand new eMag, **Retro Gamer Load 2**, a bargain if ever there was one. All you have to do is present a lucid, thought-provoking piece of literature that melts our souls. Failing that, something funny with swear words or something *Strider*-related will go down just as well…





» [SNES] The PSP has proven extremely popular with retro gamers due to its variety of excellent emulators.

EMULATE THIS

Dear **Retro Gamer**,

I can't help but notice that you rarely cover anything on emulation nowadays. I find this extremely strange as you obviously use it to take your screenshots, but you never seem to condone the use of it in your mag. Live Publishing would always run tutorials on setting up emulators and they used to prove really useful, opening my eyes to games I would have previously never considered.

You did have Emulation Nation in the earlier issues, but you soon stopped it in favour of more homebrew reviews, which I feel are completely pointless. Yes, piracy is an issue, but am I really hurting Nintendo if I play *Super Mario World* on my PSP? If you could either bring back Emulation Nation or cover emulation in more detail I would really appreciate it.

Simon Turner, via email

You're right, Simon. The vast majority of readers do use emulation to supplement their gaming needs, so maybe we should look at covering this aspect of retro gaming in a deeper form. It's a bit naive to assume that you're not hurting the industry by downloading old games, though, especially as the likes of the Virtual Console and Xbox Live Arcade are allowing publishers to sell their games all over again.

POWER DOWN

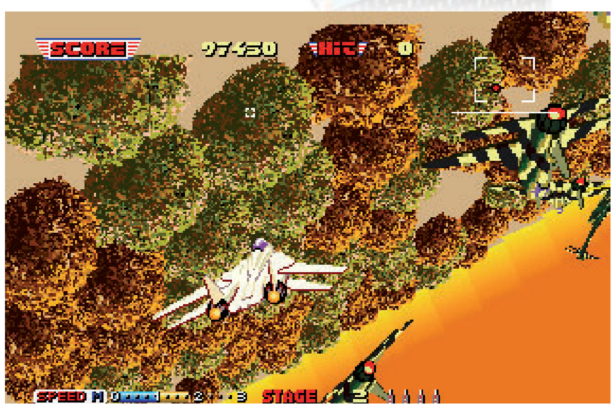
Dear **Retro Gamer**,

I was very pleased to see your two-page 'Why You Must Play' feature on Sega's classic *Power Drift*. One important note that you failed to mention in it, though, was that Sega itself released a nearly perfect port of *Power Drift* for the Dreamcast in 2002. The game was part of the Japan-only compilation *Yu Suzuki Game Works Vol 1*, which also included arcade-perfect ports of *Space Harrier*, *After Burner II*, and *OutRun* – and a strangely modified version of *Hang-On*, which has billboards advertising *Shenmue*. The collection also included a hardcover book, all in Japanese, which covers the works of Yu Suzuki at Sega, with special emphasis on the history and cabinet design of the five games included on the disc.

Just wanted to let you know in case you weren't aware of it. This version of *Power Drift* is safely much better than the C64 version voted as the number one conversion in the issue. Thanks for the great magazine!

Jason Neifeld

The best conversion is obviously based on the conversions we're currently covering,



» [Arcade] After Buner II: Just one of the near perfect arcade conversions that appeared on the Dreamcast's *Yu Suzuki Game Works Vol 1*.



CONTACT US

Snail Mail: Retro Gamer, Imagine Publishing, Richmond House, 33 Richmond Hill, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH2 6EZ

Email: retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk

Next Month: Jeff Minter



>> BURNING QUESTION?

IF YOU HAVE a burning question, such as 'Will David Braben ever patch things up with Ian Bell?' or 'does Matthew Smith check into hotels as Miner Willy?' then you should head straight over to our forum to post your questions to our interviewees. The best of the bunch will be answered and revealed in the next issue. To find out who we'll be interviewing in the coming months, visit the Retro Gamer forum now at www.retrogamer.net/forum

Jason. If we did every single conversion, later systems would always win, making the column rather pointless – one of the reasons why we only added the Saturn version of *Space Harrier* to a coin-op conversion at the very last minute. We were aware of the Dreamcast and Saturn versions, but foolishly omitted them. But while the Dreamcast port of *OutRun* is very good, it's not arcade perfect – just take a look at the back of the car.

ON YOUR BIKE

Hello, **Retro Gamer**,

Long ago, my genius father killed the engine on a racing bike he had, and instead of scrapping it, he used his engineering skills to rewire the entire bike to configure with the Genesis. The ignition of the bike turned on the console, the kickstand turned on the television, and the throttle and brakes worked as you would imagine. The bike did not lean, as it was pinned down in a permanent power lift position, and turning the handlebars is what simulated the leaning in the games. Inside the panel was also a reset button and volume control.

It worked on any game, though it was most appropriate on racing games. The ones I played most often were *Road Rash* and *Super Hang-On*, which is what I am playing here. Otherwise playing a game like *Sonic* was just weird – using a throttle to make him spin and the brake to jump – so a Genesis controller was mounted to the gear cluster to solve this.



>> Here's little Jonah playing on his modified Mega Drive. If only our dads were this clever.

I was roughly ten at the time, and since this is well before the days of the internet and digital photography, this is the only surviving photograph. I would get so into it that I would have to play dress-up.

I just thought you guys would get a kick out of this and even maybe use it for a last-page kind of blurb. Every so often, a story comes out of how a car – a real car – is set up to play games using the controls of the car, and it always gives my dad a chuckle as if it is a huge technological breakthrough. He did it quite cheaply in our own living room.

All the best,

Jonah

Ha ha, you've been rumbled, Jonah. You've already submitted this tale to us before and we printed it all the way back in issue 23. This time, though, you've actually supplied a truly amazing photo, so we're sticking it in the magazine again so new readers can enjoy it.

> "Remakes just aren't as good as the originals, further cementing the originals as classics"

ATARI ST: WHERE'S THE LOVE?

Dear **Retro Gamer**,

Why do you hate the Atari ST so? Aside from an interesting look back at the machine itself many issues ago, you very rarely cover it. It's always the Amiga 500 that gets all the love, despite the fact that, in some ways, the ST was a far superior machine. Please, please, please change this as your lack of coverage is really getting me down.

The Atari ST Knight

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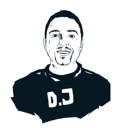
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Joined:	3 January 2009
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Occupation:	6th Form Senior Student
Website:	N/A
Fave Games System:	Super Nintendo

* BEAT THE TEAM

Think you're good at retro games? See if you can beat the staff at some of their favourite titles



DARRAN

CHOSEN GAME: TIME PILOT

Why I picked it: It's a really slick shooter that still plays really well.

Handy advice: When the final ship appears keep it alive as long as possible to boost your score.



High Score: 128,300

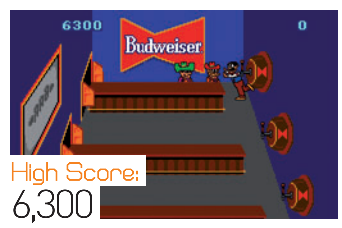


STUART

CHOSEN GAME: TAPPER

Why I picked it: As it combines my two favourite things in the entire world: videogames and beer.

Handy advice: Remember to use the varying lengths of the bars to your advantage.



High Score: 6,300



ASH

CHOSEN GAME: CANABALT

Why I picked it: This pixelly iPhone game is currently my most addictive game.

Handy advice: Timing is key for the jumps, but you have to know when not to jump too.



High Score: 2,470m

From the forum

» To have your say visit www.retrogamer.net/forum

Every month, **Retro Gamer** asks a question on the forum and prints the best replies. This month we wanted to know...

What's the scariest game you've ever experienced?

ID: Fat Trucker
Now there's jumpy and then there's scary. Jumps are increasingly common, the first probably being the famous 'dogs' incident in *Resident Evil* on the PSone. If I remember rightly I actually shouted 'Bollocks!' and dropped my joypad.

ID: necronom
The scariest game I've ever played is *Doom 3*. I used to play it with the lights out, and it freaked me out so much that sometimes I could only handle it for about half an hour, then I'd have to stop and look at pictures of fluffy kittens for a while.

ID: harlequ1n
Silent Hill, playing alone with the lights off and volume up, opening the bloody locker at the school only to have a screeching cat jump to your face... Shat me pants.

ID: mrspud
Feud! That freak in the herb garden used to scare the crap out of me every time I ventured in there.

ID: fredghostmaster
It has to be *3D Monster Maze* on the ZX81. How could graphics like that inspire so much fear?

ID: TMR
The one that always sticks in my mind was the first time a Jaggi pilot popped up in front of my ship in *Rescue On Fractalus!*, which was a jump backwards followed by a manic dive for the key that turned the shields back on!

ID: killermike
System Shock 2 is the only game that I've ever had to consider stopping playing because I was getting freaked. There are moments in that game when you just want to climb into a cupboard and wait for help to arrive.

ID: Rinoa
Being chased by Pyramid Head down that long, narrow corridor in *Silent Hill 2* was utterly terrifying at the time. Playing it at 2am with the lights off certainly didn't help calm the nerves!

ID: SpiffierRabbit
Fatal Frame, *Resi Evil*, *Silent Hill* are all scary and do have a lot of standout scary moments in them. But I would have to say *Doom 3* is the scariest videogame I have ever played! Just play with the lights on!

ID: Sel Feena
Watching Pyramid Head do... whatever the hell he does to those nurse things in *Silent Hill 2*. In fact, all of *SH2*, come to think of it. I'm in absolute agreement with what others have said: that game sticks with you long after switching off, whereas lesser titles resort to cheap – and easily created – 'jumpy' moments.

ID: bounty bob
Aliens vs Predator on the PC was truly terrifying. I could only play it for 20-minute bursts if I was playing as a human. I'd last a bit longer as a Predator and I'd get all confused and lost as an Alien.

ID: Britnostalgic
Lights off, surround sound set to scary and a PC with a copy of *Doom 3* did it for me. This game made me feel uneasy and claustrophobic. At one stage everything turned red, voices of kids in pain from a distance bellowed from my speakers, and then something jumped out at me from a dark part of the room. First time I've ever peed myself.

ID: monkey puzzle
My scariest moment is in *Gribbly's Day Out* when the force fields disappear and the giant spider/crab thing comes after you. It freaked me out.

ID: Spacepatrol
First Encounter with the T-rex in *Tomb Raider*. No contest. It brought a level of tension that had never been seen in videogames before.

ID: sscott
Dead Space. A real feeling of isolation and dread. Looks beautiful but in a terrifying way!

ID: MC1
For me it has to be *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* on the Intellivision. I used to crap myself, edging along the maps when you could hear a monster nearby, with only a couple of arrows left. Great stuff.

ID: stule52
My all-time scariest game-playing moment has to be nearly getting caught playing *Sam Fox Strip Poker*.

ID: Mire Mare
Playing *Resident Evil* – my first survival horror game ever, in fact – on the GameCube. It was the depths of winter and about 11 at night. The house was quiet, my wife downstairs and my nerves were already in bits from playing *RE* all evening. At just after 11pm, while I was concentrating hard on the on-screen events, we had a power cut! The whole house was plunged into darkness. I almost had an involuntary accident of the bowel variety.

YOUR OPINION PLEASE

GUNSTAR HEROES SUCKS

SpiffierRabbit Seriously, what is the big deal about this game? Yes you can run and yes you can gun, but not at the same time. *Metal Slug* and *Contra* are run-and-gun games; this is just a platformer in my books!

C=Style Couldn't agree more with Spiffier. This game is sh1t. *Dynamite Headdy* is much better but *Gunstar Heroes* is well overrated. Not even worth comparing it to other run-and-gun games like *Contra III* or *Metal Slug*.

gman72 It's a fine game. Period. Anyone who thinks otherwise is stupidly wrong.

Opa-Opa He's right, you know: it does suck. Bland game that is nowhere near as good as *Gryzor* or *Metal Slug*.

GAMING HELL

rossi46 Mine is being stuck in the *Groundhog Day* scenario and discovering I'm the lead playtester on *Chakan: The Forever Man* on the Mega Drive.

Denny Haynes Stuck in a dying loop in *Manic Miner*.

imparks Only being allowed to play *Airwolf* on the Spectrum for the rest of my life, knowing I'd never be good enough to get past that damn regenerating wall.

Rinoa Square Enix going into liquidation.

Woody.Cool My gaming hell is when one of my beloved systems or games no longer works.

rossi46 Having every machine ever and no mains leads!

Roo Living in a world where *Metal Slug* doesn't exist; only *Contra*.

STRATEGY GUIDES

Doddsy If a game is very open-ended I usually buy them to see what rewards or things I could have missed if I was to play the game without one.

sscott Only one I've ever bought is for *Zelda: Ocarina Of Time*. I use the net.

C=Style I don't think I've ever bought one; they're so overpriced it's not funny. I tend to use YouTube for walkthroughs these days.

Opa-Opa I'm glad you all hate guides. It means in a few years' time my collection will be even more unique as people ignore these fantastic, colourful, artwork-laden tones.

Stranger81 I've only ever bought one, and that was for *Lego Star Wars 2*. Just because of the amount of stuff on there I wanted to collect it all, and with needing certain characters at certain times I thought I'd go with the book.

Old vs NEW

Each month, we'll be finding out if the classics are better than their successors. This month, which *Turtles In Time* is your favourite?

Turtles In Time



Turtles In Time Re-Shelled



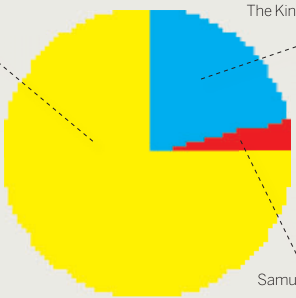
93% | 7%

Team Alfie
Throwing Foot soldiers at the screen in the remake isn't as funky as with Mode 7.

Sturoboros
The new one for sure. It keeps my four-year-old button basher happy!

HOT TOPIC

Best SNK Franchise?



"*Metal Slug*, without a doubt. The art style, detail, humour, boss design and playability make it such a great game" **– Joey**

"If the poll was 'most improved franchise' I would have voted for *Fatal Fury*" **– HEAVYface**

"I dont like fighters, but if I did, I'd still pick *Metal Slug*" **– ismellicecream**

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You're right, Mr Knight. We don't cover the ST anywhere near as much as we could. The main reason is because many of its games were available on the Amiga, and as it's the games themselves we concentrate on the format shouldn't matter. We will look into the possibility of featuring more ST games, though.

DIGITAL DRAGONS

Dear **Retro Gamer**,

You may not be aware of this, but *Dungeons & Dragons* is 35 years old this year. Therefore, I think it would be the perfect opportunity to look back at how many games have been released for the franchise over the years. Everything from the Atari 2600 to the PSP have featured *Dungeons & Dragons* games, and some of the later examples (*Planescape, Baldur's Gate*) are still considered to be some of the greatest games in their specific genre. There's an absolute wealth of information, and I'm positive that I'm not the only reader who would enjoy reading it.

Mike Timewell, Cardiff

Darran's a huge fan of *Dungeons & Dragons* and has been planning to sort something out, but whenever he's approached on the subject he rolls a D20, consults it, then goes back to his work. He was spied playing *Planescape* the other day, so maybe he's up to something.



>> The *Dungeons & Dragons* franchise has appeared on everything from the Atari 2600 to cutting-edge PCs. This is *Dungeons & Dragons Online: Stormreach*.

BOOTY LOVE

Dear **Retro Gamer**,

I'd really appreciate it if you could do a feature on car boots. While the lay of the land has changed over the last few years, it's still possible to get some absolute bargains.

The other week I was able to pick up an N64 with 20 games, including *GoldenEye, Donkey Kong 64, Mario 64, The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Time* and quite a few other classics for just £25, while a friend of mine picked up a boxed Mega Drive and 30 games for just a fiver.

It would be fantastic if you could put a feature together about the experiences of car booters, or give useful hints and tips when going to a car boot. I'm sure this is the sort of thing that could become a monthly addition to the magazine. I'd certainly read it every issue.

Philip Moore, via email

We've been looking at a feature on car booting for a while now, Philip, but we still can't find the right angle for it. Our biggest fear is that it would simply turn into a list of 'here's what I found this month', and you can find enough of those on the internet. Darran occasionally posts pictures of bargains he's found on his YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/user/RetroGamerDaz) so you'll just have to make do with those for the moment. As soon as we find a suitable format, though, we'll definitely get straight on it.

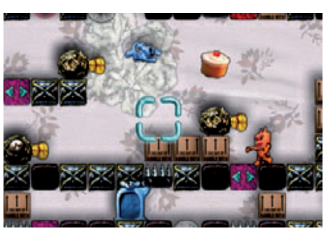
> "While the lay of the land has changed, it's still possible to get some absolute bargains at car boot sales"

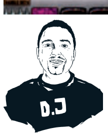
DISCUSSED THIS MONTH

The PSPgo

Being the slave to fashion that he is, Darran recently spent all his spare cash on a white PSPgo. He then proceeded to trade in games to buy their digital versions, while moaning about their high prices and the fact that all his favourite titles were already on the US store. Stuart's really happy because it now means he can actually play any UMDs that now appear in the office, while Steve just wishes he owned a PSP phat.

CURRENTLY PLAYING

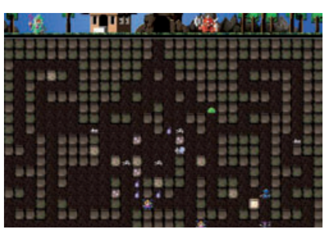




DARRAN

Kahoots

Maybe it's the mad music or that it plays like a cross between *Lemmings, The Humans* and a ball of plasticine, but I just can't get enough of the excellent *Kahoots*. It's a PSP Minis titles and a bargain at just £2.49.

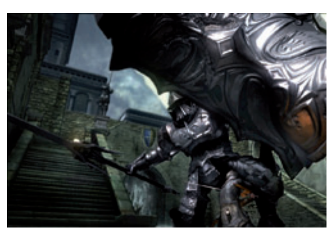




STUART

Holy Invasion Of Privacy, Badman! What Did I Do To Deserve This?

Despite being frustrating at times, I can't put down this quirky title. It's *Dungeon Keeper* meets *Dig Dug*, and it's bloody addictive.





ASH

Demon's Souls

This hardcore dungeon RPG is one of the most unforgiving games I've ever played. But it's also peppered with lots of original ideas that make it one of the most interesting this year. Check it out, if you get the chance.

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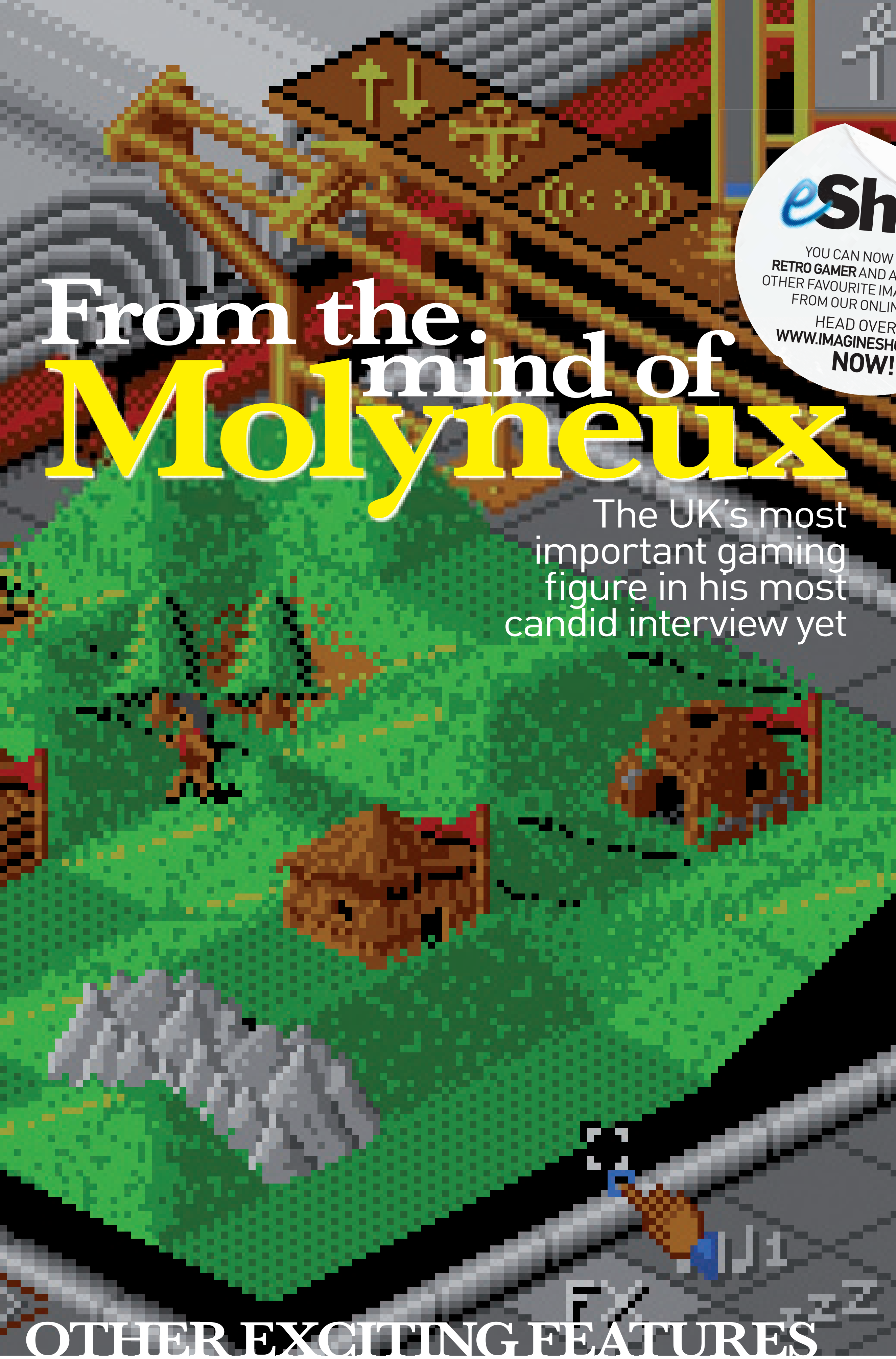
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- Find out how a simple misunderstanding created *ToeJam & Earl*, the Mega Drive's funkiest heroes

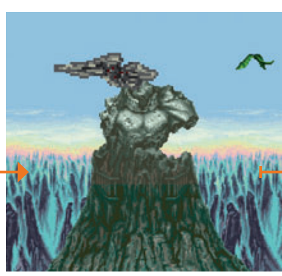


GOLDEN AXE: THE REVENGE OF DEATH ADDER

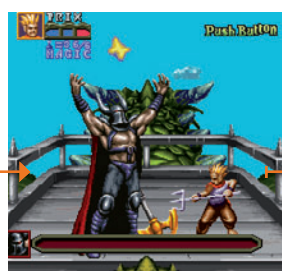
Golden Axe: The Revenge Of Death Adder is widely regarded as the best episode in the classic hack-and-slash Sega series. And so it's with great pleasure that we take a page out of this magazine to spoil the ending for you. Don't worry, there's no need to thanks us



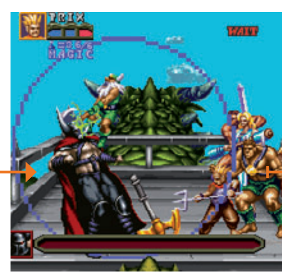
SCREEN 1
Four gallants make their way to Death Adder's fortress and a climactic battle ensues aloft a weird, giant stone bust of the man. We're on his helmet here.



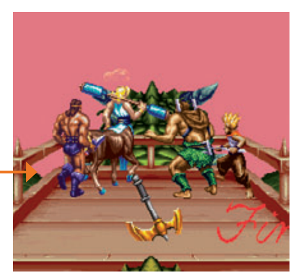
SCREEN 2
Weirdly, as the last bit of health ebbs from Adder's energy bar, he falls to the ground and the helmet blows up. It seems it was rigged to blow. Clever.



SCREEN 3
But wait, as we fly off into the sunset on the back of a very useful dragon, Adder re-emerges for one more final stand… again. How did he survive?



SCREEN 4
In one of the most violent images in a Sega game, Gilius finally enters the fight by sticking the powerful 'Golden Axe' into the head of his nemesis. Ouch!



SCREEN 5
Our quintet heads into the sunset, but where's Gilius? There are only four heroes here. Answers on a gold gnome marked 'where did the dwarf go?'